

THE INDEPENDENT

ISSUE #135, MAY 15 – JUNE 4, 2009
A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

Bloomberg Bailout

IF THE MAYOR IS GOING TO BUY THE ELECTION,
LET HIM REALLY PAY FOR IT.

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S. Hite on
Celebrating
Male Sexuality, p18

Chaos at
WBAI, p7



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A large, high-contrast black and white portrait of Noam Chomsky, an elderly man with glasses and a beard, looking slightly to the side with a thoughtful expression.



THE INDYPENDENT



THE INDYPENDENT
P.O. BOX 1417
NEW YORK, NY 10276

PHONE: 212-221-0521

GENERAL INQUIRIES AND SUBMISSIONS:

contact@indypendent.org

READER COMMENTS:

letters@indypendent.org

SUBSCRIPTIONS:

indypendent.org

DONATE ONLINE:

indypendent.org/donate

NEWS TIPS:

news@indypendent.org

ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION:

Arun Gupta: akgupta@indypendent.org

GENERAL COORDINATOR:

Jessica Lee

ILLUSTRATIONS COORDINATOR:

Frank Reynoso: freynoso@indypendent.org

DESIGNERS:

Ryan Dunsmuir, Anna Gold

INDYKIDS: indykids@indymedia.org

INDYVIDEO: awolf@indypendent.org

PUBLISH YOUR NEWS: nyc.indymedia.org

The *Indypendent* is a New York-based free newspaper published 17 times a year on Fridays to our print and online readership of more than 100,000. The newspaper is a labor of love by a network of volunteers who do all of the reporting, writing, photography, illustration, editing, designing, distribution, fundraising and website management. Since 2000, more than 600 citizen journalists, artists and media activists have contributed their energy to this project. Winner of dozens of New York Community Media Alliance awards, *The Indypendent* is dedicated to empowering people to create a true alternative to the corporate press by encouraging people to produce their own media. *The Indypendent* is funded by subscriptions, donations, grants, merchandise sales, benefits and advertising from organizations with similar missions. We accept submissions that look at news and culture through a critical lens, exploring how systems of power — economic, political and social — affect the lives of ordinary people locally and globally. *The Indypendent* reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity.

The Indypendent is the newspaper project of the New York City Independent Media Center, which is affiliated with the global Indymedia movement (indymedia.org), an international network that is dedicated to fostering grassroots media production. NYC IMC sponsors three other volunteer projects: the children's newspaper *IndyKids*, the *IndyVideo* news team and the NYC IMC open publishing website (nyc.indymedia.org).

VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTORS:

3ptline, Sam Alcoff, Steven Arnerich, Eleanor Bader, Bennett Baumer, Mike Burke, José Carmona, Andrea Coghlan, Joel Cook, Louis Joe Comeau IV, Ellen Davidson, Soozy Duncan, Tim Durning, Renee Feltz, Seth Fisher, Leo Garcia, Samantha Gorelick, Christine Hale, Danny Hellman, Elizabeth Henderson, Kim Herbst, Irina Ivanova, Alex Kane, Ruth Kelton, Thomas Marczewski, Jonathan Matas, Ana Nogueira, Jaisal Noor, Judith Mahoney Pasternak, Nicholas Powers, Katrin Redfern, Ann Schneider, Sarah Secunda, Jonathan Shannon, Jaclyn Sinquett, Juell Stewart, Gabriella Szpunt John Tarleton, Ariel Tirosh, Danny Valdes, S.M. Vidaurri, Eric Volpe, Steven Wishnia and Karen Yi.

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community calendar

MAY-JUNE

Please send event announcements to indyevents@gmail.com. The next deadline is May 29, 5pm.

FRI MAY 22-MON MAY 25

Check times and prices on website. FILMS: AFRICAN FILM FESTIVAL NEW YORK. A new generation is emerging in post-Apartheid South Africa, so it's fitting that the films in this year's African Film Festival are centered on the theme Africa in Transition, creating a vision of Africa's future through a deconstruction of its past. BAM Cinémathek, 30 Lafayette Ave, Bklyn africanfilmny.org • 718-636-4100

SAT MAY 23

12:30pm-5:30pm • \$10 Sugg Donation CONFERENCE: WE NEED SOCIALISM! Thanks to some of America's wealthiest barons and our country's finest financial manipulators, the rest of us are at the center of the biggest economic crisis we've had in decades. As usual, it's the poor and working-class people who feel the brunt of the cutbacks, massive layoffs and tightening of resources. YMCA, 180 W 135th St pslweb.org • 212-694-8762

TUE MAY 26

7pm • \$20-\$30 Donation BENEFIT: HELP BREAK THE SIEGE ON GAZA! Join Al-Awda NY, The Arab Muslim American Federation and the Break the Siege on Gaza Coalition to benefit the Viva Palestina Caravan from the United States to Gaza. Speakers include Ron Kovic and George Galloway MP. Widi Catering Hall, 5602 6th Ave, Bay Ridge, Bklyn al-awdany.org • info@al-awdany.org

WED MAY 27

7:30pm • \$5 Suggested Donation FILM: A CONVENIENT TRUTH. Curitiba, Brazil is a world-class model of intelligent, people-friendly sustainable urban planning. The film shows life-enhancing innovations in transportation, recycling and affordable housing. Prospect Park Temple Isaac, 1419 Dorchester Rd (at Marlborough), Bklyn sustainableflatbush.org

FRI MAY 29 - SUN MAY 31

Check website for times and prices. EVENT: NY LOVES MOUNTAINS FESTIVAL. The folks at Headwater Productions bring a bit of nature's beauty



CELEBRATE BIKE MONTH • MAY 2009

into the big city with this weekend full of theater, music and activism, promoting an end to mountaintop removal mining in Appalachia and natural gas drilling in the Catskills. Featuring musician Ben Sollee, best-selling authors Silas House and Jeff Biggers and a surprise musical guest. Locations vary, please see website. nylovesmountains.com

SAT MAY 30

1pm • FREE MARCH: WESTCHESTER DREAM ACT MARCH. The youth Westchester DREAM Act Task Force is holding a march and rally in White Plains to highlight the challenges facing immigrant students and to pressure elected officials to follow Congressman Eliot Engels' lead and sign on to the DREAM Act. abravo911@optonline.net 914-886-8435

SUN MAY 31

11am • FREE EVENT: PEOPLE'S ECONOMIC SUMMIT. The United Nations is meeting this June to address the international financial crisis, and in light of the unique nature of the conference, organizers from around the world are collaborating to bring activists and leaders from across various movements to speak out against imperialist global hegemony. Panels and workshops will focus on alternatives

to war, capitalism and imperialism. Sponsored by Bail Out the People Movement. Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, 47th St & 1st Ave bailoutpeople.org • 212-633-6646

11am-3pm • FREE

EVENT: ECOLOGY CENTER HISTORIC SITES BIKE TOUR. The fun begins in Union Square, then it's down to the compost-processing facility and education center, followed by a ferry ride to Governor's Island for a riverside picnic. Bring your bike and a lunch. Registration is encouraged. Meet at Union Square E and E 15th St info@leseccologycenter.org 212-477-3155

2pm-5pm • FREE

FORUM: WHICH WAY FORWARD FOR THE BLACK LEFT? A critical analysis of Obama's presidency and the state of Black politics. Harlem Tenants Council presents a panel of African-American luminaries discussing politics in the age of Obama, including 2008 Green Party presidential candidate and former U.S. Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney. St. Mary's Church, 521 W 126th St (btwn Amsterdam Ave and Old Broadway) 212-663-5248 harlemtenants@gmail.com

WED JUNE 3

6pm-9pm • \$10 Admission FILM: MEDIA THAT MATTERS. Check out the 9th Annual Media That Matters Film Festival showcasing 12 new inspiring short films. School of Visual Arts Theater, 333 West 23rd St Buy Tickets Now at mediathatmattersfest.org 646-230-6368

THU JUNE 11

7pm • FREE LECTURE: WAR, NONVIOLENCE AND HISTORY. Nicholson Baker, the award-winning author of the book, *Human Smoke: The Beginnings of World War II, the End of Civilization*, will lecture at the War Resisters League's "Dave Dellinger Lecture on Nonviolence." Judson Memorial Church 55 Washington Square South nycwrl@worldnet.att.net 718-768-7306

THU JUNE 25

6:30pm-8:30pm • FREE WORKSHOP: INDOOR WORM COMPOSTING. Learn how to set up and maintain a worm bin in your apartment. Registration required. Hunter School of Social Work, 129 E 79th St, Room 1010 leseccologycenter.org • 212-477-3155

POST YOUR OWN COMMENTS
ONLINE AT THE END OF
EACH ARTICLE OR EMAIL
LETTERS@INDYPENDENT.ORG



—TOM Y

The job of the school system in capitalist America is to reproduce the inequality that is the backbone of American society. At the very bottom, some schools serve as holding pens for the children of the poorest sections of the working class — these schools serve as holding pens to keep these kids off the street until they are 16 and give them just enough education to make them able to function as armed forces, enlisted personnel and/or prisoners in America's huge network of correctional facilities. So, honestly, can you really see any path to liberation going through the school system, or so called "alternative schools?" The only way out is revolution by the working class.

—GREGORY A. BUTLER

Brooklyn Zeroes in On Food

BY JESSICA LEE

The mood was electric in John Jay High School in Park Slope, Brooklyn, May 2. More than 3,200 people squeezed into classrooms to participate in workshops and panel discussions about chickens, rebel gardeners, Big Mac bashing and food justice.

The one-day Brooklyn Food Conference (BFC) was an ambitious effort of hundreds of Brooklyn-based volunteers and organizations including the Park Slope Food Coop, the Caribbean Women's Health Association and Added Value. The goal was to bring the borough together around food, as a way of getting people in touch with city farmers, fresh organic food, food worker justice and global food policy. It was all encompassing, grassroots and very tasty.

"People see food as a way to organize," said Nancy Romer, a long-time member of the Park Slope Food Coop and BFC general coordinator. "We don't see Americans likely to stand up around the obvious big issues such as race, class, gender, war and economy. However, food allows them to think about all sorts of big issues and the connections between them."

BFC organizers wanted to debunk the myth that healthy food is only for the privileged, and worked hard to include more than 200 partner organizations who helped promote the event from Canarsie to Fort Greene.

"The patterns of lack of food access across communities of color across the city is a crisis," said Sarita Daftary, East New York Farms! project director. "Community gardens and urban farms ... have for decades been the most effective and most citizen-led efforts to get good food to residents of East New York and many other Brooklyn neighborhoods."

Organizers say the conference is just



GROWING FROM THE BOTTOM UP: Park Slope resident Nancy Romer is helping to organize a Brooklyn-based food democracy movement. PHOTO: THOMAS MARCZEWSKI

the beginning and are hoping to build a Brooklyn food network where action and appetite can hit the streets.

BFC is instigating grassroots meetings to take place in more than a dozen neighborhoods in the next few weeks.

"Near the end of the panel discussion, the participants were discussing pragmatic ways people of color could change the food system, such as encouraging WIC and Food Stamp participants to spend at least 30 percent of their money at farmers markets," said Ajamu Brown, a Bedford-Stuyvesant food justice activist who is currently working with the Brooklyn Rescue Mission. "The main issue of concern in Bed-Stuy is the lack of healthy food alternatives. Our community is inundated with fast food outlets that contribute to the health disparities we experience such as obesity, hypertension and type 2 diabetes."

Food justice involves organizing hand to mouth. "The key worker organizing principle coming out of the conference is that employees along the food supply chain

should act in solidarity with each other and with working class eaters to take on the corporations that are poisoning our food, exploiting workers and distorting our political process with campaign contributions and lobbying," said Brandworkers International Director Daniel Gross.

There are six new food cooperatives trying to grow roots in Brooklyn, including in Bed-Stuy, Fort Greene, Prospect-Lefferts Gardens, Bushwick and Bay Ridge. The conference was a boon to connecting the co-ops to neighborhood volunteers. Romer hopes federal stimulus dollars might be available to help fund the food co-ops.

"The only way to shift this paradigm is to empower residents to support local food and push policy makers to fund programs that increase access and opportunities to good food and good jobs," Brown said.

If you would like get involved in Brooklyn-based food justice organizing, check out brooklynfoodconference.org for updates.

Sunset Park Sidewalk Clash

Bustling Fifth Avenue in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, has become a battleground for the right to New York City sidewalks.

If the Sunset Park Business Improvement District (BID) gets its way, street vendors who sell merchandise and an array of Latin American foods could be forced off the public sidewalks along the busiest stretch of Fifth Avenue.

The City Council is proposing legislation that would prohibit all street vending — including general merchandise, food and

artists — along Fifth Avenue between 38th and 64th streets. The city Department of Consumer Affairs would issue 80 new licenses for "fixed vending locations" in the new "Sunset Park Vending District," which would push existing vendors to less commercial streets. The locations will be detailed in a map provided by the Sunset Park BID to the city and would be assigned to licensed vendors who apply to an annual lottery organized by the BID.

"We are fully against the legislation," said Ali Issa, a staff organizer with the

Street Vendor Project, which advocates for the 10,000 vendors city-wide. "It will put control of public spaces in private hands and sets a dangerous precedent for the privatization of vending. This legislation will become a model for what they will try to do in other neighborhoods."

On May 5, the City Council's Consumer Affairs Committee met, but immediately postponed the hearing and vote on the legislation (Introduction 846-A). Outside City Hall, the group Artists' Response To Illegal State Tactics (A.R.T.I.S.T.) and disabled veteran vendors protested the bill.

"If the people of New York City lose all their public space to BIDs, it is an irreplaceable resource," said longtime city artist vendor advocate and A.R.T.I.S.T. President Robert Lederman. "Our free speech rights are also intimately tied to public space."

The vote has now been rescheduled for May 20. *The Indypendent* called the Sunset Park BID, but a staff member was not available for comment.

"Vendors not only have the right to be there, but they are an integral part of communities," Issa said. "When the street vendors go, it is the early warning signs of the coming gentrification of the neighborhood."

—JESSICA LEE



STANDOFF: Artists and street vendors protest a City Council hearing May 5 on a new bill that would place restrictions on vendors in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. PHOTO: ROSS PILOT

Tenants and housing rights groups are racing to get the New York State Senate to pass their rent-law reform agenda before the session ends June 22. They are intensifying pressure on senators who are standing in the way, and lobbying for a complete 10-bill package instead of concentrating on repealing the state's vacancy decontrol laws. Growing increasingly impatient, tenants are ratcheting up their tactics — and it is paying off.

"You are asking for the right to occupy your apartments, a place where dreams are born and lived," said State Senator Eric Adams (D-Brooklyn). "You must reach the level of anger to say enough is enough. We are going to repeal vacancy decontrol."

Tenant organizations are backing legislation that would give the city home rule over rent and eviction laws, protect tenants against mass evictions for "owners' use," and try to combat fraudulent rent increases. Their top priority, however, is repealing the law that lets landlords deregulate vacant apartments if there's a vacancy and rent surpasses \$2,000 a month. Once this happens, there are no limits on rent increases and tenants do not have the right to renew their leases automatically, so vacancy decontrol gives owners a strong incentive to harass rent-regulated tenants.

The top target for protests has been Pedro Espada Jr. (D-Bronx), the Senate housing committee chair.

Espada, hit hard by tenant protests and critical news reports, shocked the 250 tenants assembled for a May 12 lobby day by appearing at a press conference in support of repeal of vacancy decontrol. Though he did not specifically say he would support repeal of vacancy decontrol, his presence was a clear victory for the tenant movement.

"I want to assure every one of you to go home knowing that Pedro Espada Jr. is your housing champion," Espada said.

"Espada came because of the pressure we've applied. It didn't come from the heart; he's in survival mode," said Joseph Ferdinand, a Bronx tenant.

Also atop tenants' list of targets are Senators Craig Johnson (D-Nassau County), Carl Kruger (D-Brooklyn) and Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester), the Senate deputy majority leader. Activists are sending the senators letters and phone calls and canvassing in their districts.

Espada may be the least of the housing movement's concerns. *Crain's New York Business* reports that the bill to repeal vacancy decontrol may go to the finance committee headed by Kruger. According to the *Village Voice* reporter Tom Robbins, Kruger has a campaign war chest of \$1.6 million, "much of it from city real-estate moguls who appreciate his support." Kruger has not taken a position on repeal of vacancy decontrol.

"Essentially, Espada and Kruger are conspiring to bottle up the bill in the finance committee," said Michael McKee, of Tenants Political Action Committee (TPAC).

Johnson, closely aligned with the centrist Klein, relied heavily on both union and New York City tenant support to win office, taking a Republican-held seat in a special election in 2007. At the time, Johnson needed tenant manpower to help his campaign. "If elected," he promised in a letter sent to the TPAC, "I will be a visible and vocal advocate for repeal of vacancy decontrol and other pro-tenant measures in Albany." But Johnson has failed to endorse repealing vacancy decontrol bill.

Bennett Baumer is an organizer on the West Side of Manhattan.

If Bloomberg wants to buy the election,



CUNY FOR ALL

For generations of New Yorkers, a college education at the City University of New York (CUNY) has been the path to a better life. But with the cost of higher education soaring while the economy plummets, few are in a position do more to shore up the dream of a college education for the children of working class New Yorkers than Michael Bloomberg. If only the self-styled “education mayor” would put his money where his mouth is:

\$ Bloomberg could personally cover the \$2,800 annual tuition of the 81,538 students enrolled at CUNY’s six community colleges for \$228,306,400. Seventy-six percent of CUNY’s community college students come from households that earn less than \$40,000 per year.

\$ For another \$28,538,300, Bloomberg could cover the \$350 tuition increase that is being proposed to take effect next fall at CUNY community colleges.

\$ Bloomberg could cover the \$4,600 annual tuition of CUNY’s 131,755 senior college students for \$606,073,000.

\$ Bloomberg could restore free tuition (which existed at CUNY from 1848-1976) for a year for all 213,293 CUNY undergraduates for \$834,379,400.

\$ Bloomberg could cover CUNY’s proposed 2009-2010 operating budget for \$2.59 billion.

Numbers based on CUNY’s Fall 2008 enrollment figures.

— JOHN TARLETON

Bill the Billionaire

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

Mayor Michael Bloomberg is trying to buy re-election to a third term. The city’s economic and media power elites have already anointed him.

Bloomberg is expected to spend about \$80 million on his campaign. That’s not even \$10 a person. Considering that the mayor is worth about \$16 billion, it’s pitiful.

What do the people of New York City get for that \$80 million? A pittance. TV attack commercials, robocalls, back-page ads in neighborhood weeklies and glossy, full-color campaign brochures that give mail carriers bad backs and go straight to landfills.

We want a better deal. If he’s going to buy the election, let’s at least get a decent price for it. For the \$11.5 billion he has added to his fortune since elected mayor in 2001, we’d be willing to cancel the election and crown him mayor for four more years.

Under Bloomberg, the gap between the rich and everyone else has widened so much that if Manhattan were a country, it might beat out Namibia for the title of the most economically polarized in the world. Developers have packed New York’s skyline with luxury condos. Landlords have driven tenants out of their homes all over the city to jack up rents. The symbol

of Bloomberg’s New York is city parks where drinking fountains don’t work, but there are plenty of pushcarts peddling pints of bottled water for \$2.

The mayor sees all this as both pragmatic and righteous — what higher purpose could there be than maximizing real-estate values? His vision of the city is turning it into a slightly greener, pro-Israel version of Dubai. If re-elected, he will continue to serve the interests of the ultra-rich.

So let him put some real money into buying the election. Let him pay for the value he’s getting.

What could \$11.5 billion buy for the people of New York? The Metropolitan Transportation Authority’s annual deficit is now estimated at almost \$2 billion. For \$6.5 billion, Bloomberg could avert a fare increase and prevent service cuts for the next four years.

The city has a critical housing shortage. For \$3.5 billion, he could pay for 35,000 new apartments of affordable housing. This would create thousands of construction jobs and allow many working families to remain in the city.

That would still leave another billion for the schools, and \$500 million for job programs, alternative energy and more. We could restore the \$4 million cut from AIDS programs last year or reopen the public-housing senior centers closed

to save \$18 million. Bloomberg, who touts himself as the consummate expert manager who only wants the best for the city, found those programs too costly — while he was giving the Yankees and Mets almost \$1 billion in subsidies to build new stadiums where only Bernie Madoff can afford front-row seats.

Many people think Bloomberg is a “liberal” because he’s not as blatantly racist as former Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and not as fanatically anti-gay as the national Republicans. Well, if a gay black investment banker wants to buy a \$3.4 million condo on the Greenwich Village waterfront, the mayor would roll out the red carpet. But if Keisha the teenage butch wants to hang out on Christopher Street because it’s safer to be herself and easier to meet girls there than in Brownsville, she’s part of a trouble-making element that must be stamped out.

Bloomberg is not a liberal. He’s a devout plutocrat. He strongly opposes raising taxes on the rich, even to avert a massive subway-fare increase. Instead, he wants to raise the city’s sales tax. So a struggling single mother would have to kick in an extra quarter to get her kid a \$50 pair of sneakers, but millionaires wouldn’t have to pay a penny more in income taxes.

“We want the rich from around this country to move here. We love the rich people,” he said on his radio show in March. “I don’t know what

For \$11.5 billion, we’d be willing to cancel the election and crown him mayor for

BILL TO BLOOMBERG TO HELP SAVE THE CITY:

\$2,590,000,000 – Cover CUNY budget for a year while also paying tuition for all CUNY undergraduate students

\$1,800,000,000 – Pay off MTA’s deficit, preventing the fare hike

\$4,300,000,000 – Add 43,000 units of affordable housing

\$10,000,000 – Restore proposed cuts to AIDS programs

let him really pay for it.

'fair' means. You can argue that if you make more money, you deserve more money."

Yes, \$11.5 billion would be a big hit on the mayor's personal fortune. It would knock him from 17th to 110th on *Forbes* magazine's list of the 400 richest Americans. He'd be as impecunious as Ross Perot.

Bloomberg would have to scrape by on a paltry \$4.5 billion — the same fortune he had in 2001, before he took office.

But he could console himself with the knowledge that he spent his money on building a better city for all New Yorkers, instead of merely pumping out endless rivers of propaganda claiming that he's done so.



four more years.

\$1,000,000,000 – Cover cost of proposed sales tax increase

\$28,200,000 – Restore proposed library cuts

\$1,300,000,000 – Give food stamp recipients an extra \$1,000 for 2009

\$471,800,000 – New laptops for city's 1.1 million public school students

TOTAL= \$11,500,000,000

(To check out our sources, read this article online on indypendent.org)

Mike's Money Madness

By ALEX KANE

Mayor Bloomberg's key rationale for scrapping term limits and thus allowing him to run again was that he was best able to steer the economy through crisis.

"The bottom line is we face some tough times. I'd be honored to run again and if I'm voted [in] again, I'd be honored to serve," Bloomberg said in October 2008, a month before the City Council, in a 29 to 22 vote, gave him the go-ahead to run for a third term. "This is a chance to continue the direction the city has been going in."

He has a point. Bloomberg's stewardship of New York City's economy has been good — for Wall Street plutocrats and rich developers. According to census figures released in August 2008, the richest fifth in Manhattan made nearly 40 times more than the poorest fifth in 2005: \$351,333 compared to \$8,855.

Bloomberg's civil liberties record is excellent as well — for the NYPD, whose repressiveness has increased under Bloomberg. Hundreds of thousands of people of color continue to be racially profiled by the NYPD (see page 6), and the police's conduct at the Republican National Convention 2004 has thus far resulted in the city paying more than a million dollars to settle lawsuits from illegally arrested protesters.

Anyhow, let's just look at the numbers:

\$16 billion:

Bloomberg's net worth in March 2009, according to business publication *Forbes*. In 2008, he was worth \$20 billion.

\$4.5 billion:

Bloomberg's net worth in 2001, the year he took office, according to *Forbes*.

\$14,872:

Annual income of someone working 40 hours a week at minimum wage, 52 weeks per year.

#1: Bloomberg tops the list as the richest person in New York

Over 8,000: The number of homeless families with children who sleep in city-run shelters each night; the highest ever recorded.

6: Number of residences around the world the mayor owns — upstate New York, Colorado, Florida, Bermuda, London and the Upper East Side of Manhattan.

474: Number of homeless families moved into housing from municipal shelters in fiscal year 2008. There has been a sharp drop off since Bloomberg policy effectively cut off the homeless from federal housing aid in late 2004. In fiscal year 2004, almost 6,000 homeless families were moved into housing from shelters.

\$400: Amount per night to stay at the Four Seasons Hotel in London, where Bloomberg puts up his aids.

5: Percent of affordable housing that will be available as part of Bloomberg's rezoning of 125th Street, compared with the promised but flawed number 46 percent.

\$850 million: Amount of taxpayer investments for the new Yankee Stadium.

\$165 million: Combined amount shelled out by New York City and State taxpayers for CitiField, the Mets' new stadium.

1: Number of parks in the Bronx operating by the opening day of the new Yankee Stadium to compensate for lost park land it was built on.

943: Library jobs to be cut under Bloomberg's proposed 2010 budget.

\$83 million: Amount in budget cuts proposed for 2010 to the Administration for Child Services, even as reports of abuse and neglect increase.

86,705: Number of people stopped by NYPD in 2001, the last year of the Giuliani administration. 73 percent stopped were Black or Latino.

531,159: Number of individuals stopped by NYPD in 2008, 80 percent of whom were black or Latino.

1,806: People arrested by NYPD during the Republican National Convention in 2004.

90: Percent of people arrested during the Republican National Convention who saw their charges dropped.

NYPD Getting Frisky

BY ALEX S. VITALE

Concerned about the New York Police Department's (NYPD) "stop-and-frisk" tactics, civil libertarians, civil rights activists, community organizations and criminal defense attorneys gathered at the New York City Council's chambers for a hearing April 30 to examine whether the policy amounts to racial profiling.

As a result of investigations by former New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer and lawsuits by the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) and the New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU), it is now known that nearly 90 percent of the people stopped are Black, Latino or Asian and that in 90 percent of cases the person stopped was released without any accusation of illegal behavior.

Intensified under former Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, stop and frisks have surged under Mayor Michael Bloomberg. CCR testified at the hearing that the NYPD recorded 535,123 stops in 2008, "82 percent of which involved Black and Latino New Yorkers," even though they only make up 50 percent of the population. CCR added that under Bloomberg, police stops have "increased more than 500 percent while the tremendous racial disparity in who gets stopped has persisted."

Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly skipped the hearing before the City Council's Public Safety and Civil Rights Committees, sending an underling, who was instructed to read a letter but not to take any questions.

The day of the hearing, the NYPD announced a program in Harlem, the South Bronx and East New York to hand out slips of paper to those stopped. According to *The New York Times*, the paper lists reasons why they were stopped, including, "reasonable suspicion that the person 'has committed, is committing or is about to commit' a crime ... '[is] carrying what appears to be a weapon,' and 'sights or sounds suggestive of criminal activity (ringing alarm, running from crime scene).'"

City Council Public Safety Committee Chair Peter F. Vallone Jr. (D-Queens) commented that the NYPD tends to announce policy changes "on the eve of a public safety hearing, which then slants coverage of the hearing toward their new policy."

Civil liberties groups say they are troubled that hundreds of thousands of young men who have been stopped have had their names permanently entered into a police database. NYCLU Director Donna Lieberman said, "The NYPD's collection and retention of this information represents a violation of the privacy rights of New Yorkers, may be illegal and — given that the individuals stopped are disproportionately Black or Hispanic — raises major concerns about racial profiling. People who have done nothing wrong should not be in a police database."

Nicole Smith, an attorney at the Bronx Defenders, added that many of the police stops fail to meet legal standards and are often a form of illegal harassment. In addition, these stops can often turn into arrests because of illegal searches or police harassment of those who question or resist illegal police actions. Smith also raised concern about whether the police make bogus arrests to bolster their overtime or productivity numbers. These arrests can lead to people losing their jobs, getting kicked out of public housing and being deported.

Both Mayor Bloomberg and Democratic Party mayoral candidate William Thompson have avoided discussion of policing issues. In contrast, Reverend Billy Talen, Green Party candidate for mayor, has taken a strong stand against "stop-and-frisk" policing, as well as racial profiling and harassment of LGBTQ people by the police, a problem brought up at the hearing by Dru Levasseur from the Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund.

For more coverage on NYPD's "stop-and-frisk" program, visit indydependent.org.



DONDIJ.COM



MORE JOBS ON THE STREETS: Street Vendor Project co-director Michael Wells addresses more than 40 vendors who rallied April 28 at City Hall to advocate City Council to pass a resolution dramatically increasing the number of street vending licenses and permits. "We are asking Mayor Bloomberg to serve the needs of everyday, average New Yorkers," Wells said.

PHOTO: KAREN YI

Permits Please

BY KAREN YI

For 19 years, Mustafa, an immigrant from Senegal, has been waiting to receive a vending license from the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs. According to the Street Vendor Project, he is one of 13,000 people on the waiting list. After years of waiting, Mustafa has begun selling art in lower Manhattan without a license.

The city caps merchandise vending licenses at 853 and food permits at 3,100 — the same level since 1979 — leaving small entrepreneurial New Yorkers with few alternatives but to sell their products without a license.

More than 40 street vendors rallied on the steps of City Hall April 28 urging the New York City Council to pass the bill, known as Introduction 324, which would create more than 10,000 legal jobs by increasing the number of vendors allowed on the streets, raising numbers for general merchandising to 15,000 and food permits to 25,000, with a provision to increase the number by 5 percent each year afterward.

Intro 324 was introduced in 2006 by Councilmember Charles Barron (D-East New York) and so far has 11 co-sponsors. But even after its Council hearing in November 2008, the bill still has not been passed.

Workers at the Urban Justice Center's Street Vendor Project say they are getting a record number of calls requesting assistance in getting street vending licenses. With the current economic recession, they say, now is the time to push the bill to the forefront.

"Each day we deliver the disappointing news to dozens of cash-strapped New Yorkers ... that they are out of luck," said Michael Wells, co-director of the Street Vendor Project, composed of more than 750 street vendors working together to create a movement for permanent change.

Vendor advocates also raised concerns

over a bill (S04045) introduced by state Senator Daniel Squadron (D-25th District) April 8 that would allow police to fingerprint vendors caught selling products without a license.

This legislation concerns Ivet Bandirma, executive director of Esperanza Del Barrio, an organization that serves to empower street vendors in New York City. Bandirma said that S04045 is "a direct attack on the immigrant population." It is estimated that more than 80 percent of street vendors are immigrants.

Fingerprinting immigrant vendors puts them in direct contact with the criminal-justice system, explains Bandirma, and once immigrants are in the system, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is contacted.

Having met with community groups opposed to the bill in the past several weeks, Squadron has made it clear that this is not an anti-immigrant bill, but rather a way to allow the city to enforce its laws better.

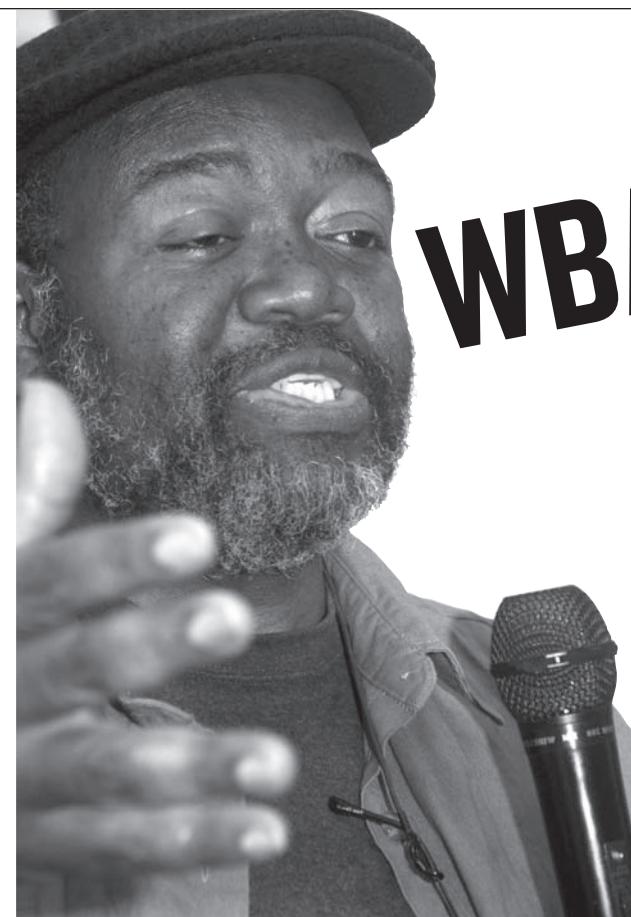
"There is no question the current system is not working for anyone — vendors, local businesses, pedestrians, or communities," Squadron said. "That's why I'm working with advocates and others for comprehensive vending reform that is fair, protects the rights of immigrants and improves the system for everybody."

But protecting immigrants is just one concern, vendor advocates explain. "It's just wrongheaded," said Ali Issa, an organizer with the Street Vendors Project. "The approach has nothing to do with the causes of the problem at all, of why people vend without a license."

"We have some hard-working people, and all they want is the opportunity to work," said Douglas Lasdon, executive director of the Urban Justice Center, a nonprofit that advocates on behalf of New York City's most vulnerable communities. "There really is no legitimate policy reason for them not to have that opportunity."



INDYDEPENDENT REPORTER JOSEPH HUFF-HANNON WAS HONORED WITH A 2009 JAMES ARONSON AWARD FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE JOURNALISM for his investigative story into how Brooklyn African-American senior citizens were targeted by the subprime lending industry. The awards are named in honor of James Aronson, Hunter College professor and legendary editor from 1947 to 1967 of the newsweekly *The National Guardian*. *Indydependent* contributor Sarah Stuterville also won the Aronson Award for Best Student Journalist in 2005 for her reporting on private military academies in Brooklyn.



WBAI'S BERNARD WHITE. PHOTO: MARK BAILEY

BY JOHN TARLETON

When WBAI-99.5 FM's new acting General Manager Lavarn Williams visited the tally room during the first week of the station's May fund drive, she was surprised to find pledge cards that had not been handed over to the fund drive supervisor four hours after the pledges had originally been received from the left-leaning radio station's listeners.

"You would never guess how much things have deteriorated in terms of establishing controls," Williams said. "We are getting people to realize pledge cards are like money and you can't just leave them lying around."

For Williams, keeping better track of pledge cards is only one part of a much larger push to transform a venerable, left-wing radio station that faces a slew of problems including more than a million dollars in debts, declining audience and membership, the threat of eviction from its downtown office and a backlogged premiums fulfillment process that has angered many of the station's supporters.

"This was a model of failure," Williams said, "and they wanted us to implement it throughout the network."

Williams' arrival is being cheered by those who believe the station has been mismanaged but others warn that the station's longstanding commitment to racial inclusion is at risk, noting that WBAI's General Manager Tony Riddle and Program Director Bernard White, both of whom are African-American, have already been removed from their posts.

"This is about a 25-year struggle at WBAI," said Bob Lederer, a member of the Justice and Unity Caucus which supports the station's deposed leadership. "WBAI was predominantly white in the 1960s and 1970s. And there has always been a rear guard of white listeners and programmers who want to go back."

HARD TIMES AT WBAI

Williams, who is also black, is a retired corporate financial manager who started volunteering at WBAI's sister station in Berkeley, California, in 1996. She is also the interim chief financial officer at the Pacifica Foundation, which holds the license for WBAI as well as four other radio stations in Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, Houston and the San Francisco Bay Area. The five stations, which make up the Pacifica

Radio Network, reach a potential audience of 45 million people. WBAI, which beams its 50,000-watt signal from atop the Empire State Building, alone has a potential audience of 20 million people and an estimated market value of \$150 million.

Pacifica was founded as the world's first listener-sponsored radio network in 1949 by World War II-era draft resisters who dreamed of using the airwaves to "contribute to a lasting understanding between nations and between the individuals of all nations, races, creeds and colors." And while the network has been a haven for marginalized voices during its six decades of existence, it has also been plagued by internal strife throughout much of its history. The feuding has been particularly intense in recent years at WBAI. Supporters and critics of the station's leadership have vied for control of the Local Station Board (LSB), a 24-member body elected by listeners and staff.

Supporters of the station's deposed management compare the recent takeover of the station to the December 2000 "Christmas Coup" in which Pacifica's then-national leadership sacked White and banished more than two dozen programmers and producers.

The sacking sparked a tenacious protest movement that ultimately forced Pacifica's then-leaders from power and restored White and others to their posts.

"Last time it was Democratic Party centrists," Lederer said of Pacifica's previous regime. "This time it is liberals and leftists with a racist world view or who are simply opportunistic."

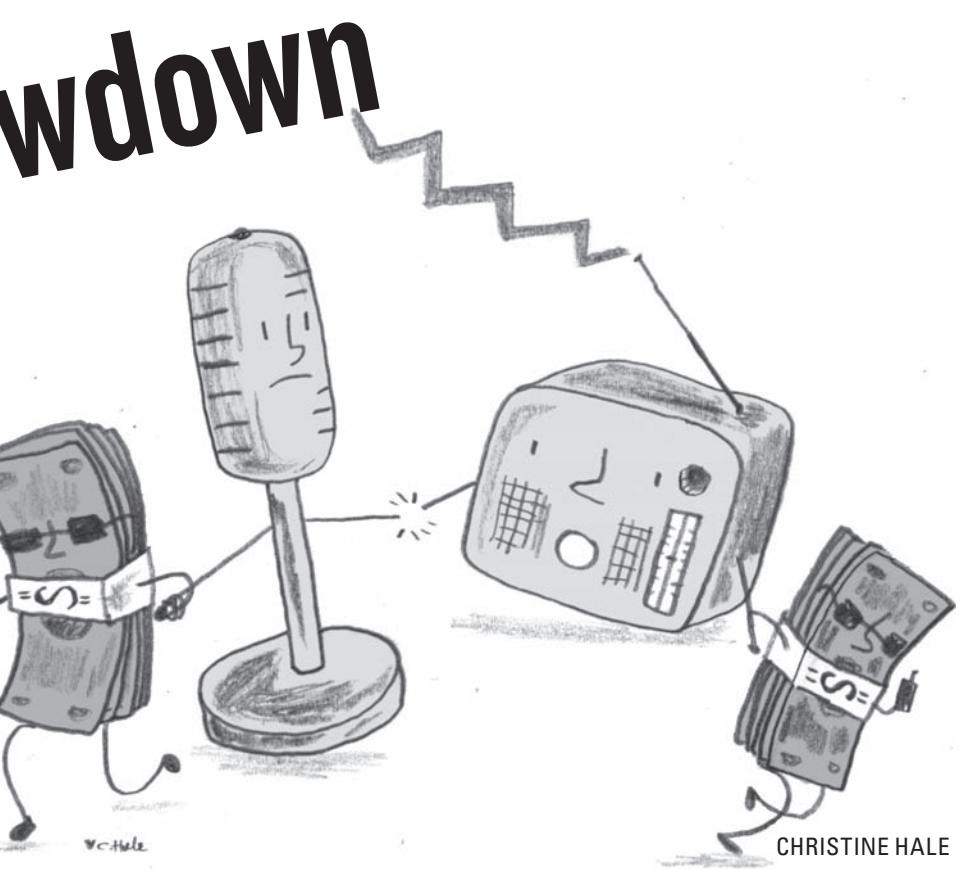
"A lot of shows that appeal to people who are very progressive and black are probably going to get cut," said Lisa Davis, also of Justice and Unity, who serves with Lederer on the LSB.

"WBAI is the only place where poor people can get their stories told in their own voice," White said, who was suspended May 8 and banned from the station premises. "There were folks who felt that was chasing away white folks with money."

White also expressed concern the Pacifica Foundation may sell the 99.5FM frequency and move WBAI to a less prominent location on the radio dial.

As the infighting has escalated, WBAI's fortunes have steadily declined.

The station's number of listener sponsors has fallen from 18,600 in January 2004 to about 15,000. While audience numbers fluctuate, the number of people who listen to WBAI at least once in a week has declined



from an average of 240,000 in the fall of 2003 to 180,000 in spring of 2008, according to pacificana.org.

The time the station spends in fund drive has surpassed more than 100 days per year even as fund drive results have declined, especially since the recession hit full force last fall.

WBAI received \$1,248,743 in listener support in the first six months of Fiscal Year 2008, but only took in \$975,572 from its listeners in the first six months of the 2009 fiscal year that began on October 1, according to Jamie Ross, Chair of Pacifica's National Finance Committee and also a member of the WBAI LSB. The station's February fund drive fell short of its goal of \$720,000 in pledges by about \$180,000, Ross said.

In comparison, Pacifica's Los Angeles station raised \$1.042 million during its February fund drive, Williams said.

WBAI ceased making its central office payments to Pacifica in the fall of 2006 and was \$999,000 in arrears by March 23 of this year, Williams said. The payments cover a number of network expenses including rights to broadcast Democracy Now!, a popular one-hour daily news show. The financial shortfalls caused by WBAI's troubles forced Pacifica to take out a \$300,000 line-of-credit from Wells Fargo last August, which Ross said was secured by using a \$400,000 certificate of deposit that belonged to the network's Berkeley station. The full amount of the loan is due in August.

ON THE BRINK OF EVICTION

By early April, the station had also fallen \$128,000 behind on rent for its office space at 120 Wall Street and owed another \$75,000 in back payments for its transmitter atop the Empire State Building, Ross said.

According to Williams, WBAI's then General Manager Anthony Riddle renegotiated the lease with Silverstein Properties without notifying Pacifica's national leadership. Riddle, the station's fifth general manager in seven years, was removed from his position May 6. He said he was encouraged by Pacifica to revise the payment schedule.

"This was the right thing to do," Riddle wrote in an email to *The Indypendent*. "There is no reason why it cannot be paid."

Under the revised agreement, Williams said WBAI (and by extension the Pacifica Foundation) faces making two rent payments totaling almost \$60,000 in May, two more payments totaling \$75,000 in June and two more rent payments by July 25 totaling

\$45,000 or be subject to immediate eviction if it misses a single payment.

The first check for \$29,444.30 is due May 18 and another check for the same amount is due May 25.

"That [May] fund drive has to be really good," said Williams, who was officially named as WBAI's acting general manager May 7 by Pacifica's interim executive director Grace Aaron.

Williams has also been joined by fellow Californian Tony Bates, a former fund drive supervisor at Pacifica's Los Angeles station who is currently acting as WBAI's fund drive supervisor.

Besides making the tally room operation more efficient, Williams said that Bates has worked with programmers on improving their premiums and refining their on-air pitching. She said that the station had raised \$225,000 in the first week of the May fund drive which began May 4.

"He's really raised the level of consciousness of the staff," Williams said. "He's extraordinary. I've never seen anyone like him in my life."

Continued on page 19



WBAI'S NEW GM LAVARN WILLIAMS.

School Bullying Is Not Child's Play



Eleven-year-old Carl Joseph Walker-Hoover

BY ARIEL TIROSH

Sirdeaner L. Walker woke up April 6 expecting another normal day. But when she returned home from work and walked up the steps to the second floor of her house in Springfield, Mass., she found her 11-year-old son, Carl Joseph Walker-Hoover, hanging from an extension cord in the stairwell.

Ten days later, Jaheem Herrera, an 11-year-old boy in Atlanta, Ga. also hanged himself. His two younger sisters found his body.

Both boys were the target of anti-gay bullying and harassment at school. In both cases, school officials have been accused of ignoring the problem.

After Jaheem's death, his best friend said, "He told me that's he tired of everybody always messing with him in school. He is tired of telling the teachers and the staff, and they never do anything about the problems. So the only way out is by killing himself."

Carl's mother Sirdeaner Walker had repeatedly complained to the school about her son being bullied, but the school ignored her, calling it teenage immaturity.

"It's not just a gay issue," Walker told *The Advocate*, the nation's oldest gay newsmagazine. "It's bigger. He was 11 years old, and he wasn't aware of his sexuality. These homophobic people attach derogatory terms to a child who's 11 years old, who goes to church, school and the library, and he becomes confused. He thinks, 'Maybe I'm like this. Maybe I'm not. What do I do?'"

Last year, the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN) published its biennial National School Climate Survey, the most comprehensive survey to date on the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth. The study found that 86.2 percent of LGBT students reported being verbally harassed, 44.1 percent reported being physically harassed and 22.1 percent reported being physically assaulted at school in the past year because of their real or perceived sexual orientation. Nearly one-third of LGBT students missed a class or missed a day of school in the month preceding the survey because they felt unsafe.

More than 67 percent of students reported hearing school personnel making homophobic, sexist or negative remarks about gender expression. At the same time, less than one-fifth of students reported that school personnel intervened when hearing those remarks.

Transgender youth face even higher levels of harassment when compared to non-transgender queer students. Nine out of 10 transgender students experience verbal harassment, and more than half reported having been physically harassed.

According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, LGBT youth are six times more likely to commit suicide. Yet suicide is not the only problem that LGBT youth face. In February 2008, 15-year-old Lawrence King was murdered by a fellow student, 14-year-old Brandon McInerney, during class in Oxnard, Calif. King was openly gay, having come out when he was 10 years old. Two days before the shooting, King asked McInerney to be his Valentine in front of McInerney's friends. Prosecutors say McInerney later told one of King's friends, "Say goodbye to your friend Larry because you're never going to see him again." McInerney is being tried as an adult for premeditated murder and a hate crime.

SAFE SCHOOLS IMPROVEMENT ACT

On May 5, Reps. Linda Sánchez (D-Calif.), Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.) and Carolyn McCarthy (D-N.Y.) introduced the Safe Schools Improvement Act (H.R. 2262) in the U.S. House of Representatives. The

bill, which amends the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act, would require any school receiving funding from the act to provide assessments on bullying and harassment in their schools and to include policies to address bullying and harassment in their codes of conduct.

In New York, the State Assembly passed the Dignity for All Students Act April 7 by a 131-5 vote. The State Senate is currently reviewing the bill (S. 1987A). The New York City Council passed its own Dignity for All Students Act in 2004, overriding a veto by Mayor Michael Bloomberg. The bill ordered schools to implement preventative training programs, reporting and response mechanisms, but the Bloomberg administration has refused to enforce the law.

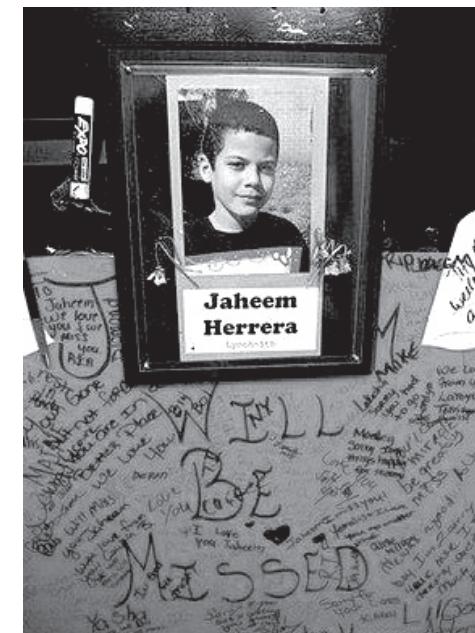
According to Erica Braudy, a lead organizer at the New York Civil Liberties Union, one of the most powerful tools in the state bill is the creation of staff positions to deal with harassment. "Students will know who to go to if they are harassed," she said. And instead of being punished, educators will use peer mediation and counseling to alleviate the problem.

"For students across the country, the very basic support that a school can provide will now be present at school," said Daryl Presgraves, media relations manager at GLSEN. "The first thing schools must say is that this will not be tolerated."

"We are advocating for those intensive training programs that would allow teachers and staff to see the problems and raise red flags when they see something is wrong," Braudy said.

LGBT harassment at school often goes unreported because students feel that school officials will not respond to the problem. The 2007 National School Climate Survey found that the major reason students did not report harassment was what they perceived as apathetic administrators. One ninth grade female from New York was quoted in the survey saying "I'm not sure if they will do anything about it. ... I've heard that other people have gone to administrators, and all they do is ask if the reason they were harassed was true."

GLSEN has found that one of the most positive things a school can do is implement an anti-bullying policy. Reports show that students face lower levels of harassment when the school is willing to confront bullying and embrace the cultures of the victims. However, according to Presgraves, there is still a long way to go to implement the necessary education interventions that would work nationwide.



Eleven-year-old Jaheem Herrera

"It is time we combat outdated and erroneous beliefs that downplay the seriousness of bullying," said Rep. Sánchez in a May 5 press release introducing the Safe Schools Improvement Act. "Bullying is not a harmless 'rite of passage' and can no longer be brushed off as child's play."

NEW YORK CITY SAFE PLACES FOR YOUTH

Audre Lorde Project

85 South Oxford Street, Brooklyn,
718-596-0342 • alp.org

Bronx Community Pride Center

448 East 149th Street, Bronx
718-292-4368 • bronxpride.org

Generation Q

30-74 Steinway Street, 2nd Floor, Astoria
718-204-5955 • myspace.com/generationqrules

Hetrick-Martin Institute

2 Astor Place, Manhattan
Ages 21 and under.
212-674-2400 • hmi.org

GLOBE

301 Grove Street, Brooklyn,
718-418-7690 ext 207 • maketheroad.org

Community Health Action of Staten Island

56 Bay Street, 6th Floor, Staten Island
718-981-3366 • sihealthaction.org

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Grand St. Settlement
Pitt & Rivington

Bluestockings

172 Allen St.

Housing Works

126 Crosby St.

ABC No Rio

156 Rivington St.

Mercer St. Books

206 Mercer St.

New York Public Library

Jefferson Market Branch

Sixth Ave. & 9th St.

Brecht Forum

451 West St.

4th Street Food Co-op

58 E. 4th St

Theater for the

New City

155 First Ave.

14TH TO 96TH ST.

Manhattan Neighborhood Network

537 W. 59th St.

Housing Conservation

Coordinators

777 Tenth Ave.

Domus

413 W. 44th St.

New York Public Library

Muhlenberg Branch

209 W. 23rd St.

Countee Cullen Library

104 W. 136th St.

Julia de Burgos Cultural Center

106th St. & Lexington

Uptown Sister's Books

156 St. & Amsterdam

BROOKLYN

Brooklyn Museum

200 Eastern Pkwy.

BAM

30 Lafayette Ave.

Vox Pop

1022 Cortelyou Rd.

Tillie's of Brooklyn

248 DeKalb Ave.

Tea Lounge

Union St. & 7th Ave.

Video Gallery

310 7th Ave.

Ozzie's Coffee Shop

249 5th Ave.

57 7th Ave.

Verb Café

Bedford Ave. & N. 5th St.

Videology

308 Bedford Ave.

Pillow Café

505 Myrtle Ave.

Sisters Community

Hardware

900 Fulton St.

Pacific St. Library

25 Fourth Ave.

Clear Spin Laundromat

192 Myrtle Ave.

Outpost Café

1014 Fulton St.

Blackbird Café

197 Bedford Ave.

'sNice Café

315 5th Ave.

Brooklyn Public Library

Pacific Branch

561 Pacific St.

Brooklyn Public Library

Bedford Branch

496 Franklin St.

Terraza Café

40-19 Glean St., Elmhurst

Café Aubergine

49-22 Skillman Ave.

Flushing

BRONX

The Point

940 Garrison Ave.

Brook Park

141st St. & Brook Ave.

Mothers on the Move

928 Intervale St.

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Responsibility to Protect?

BY STEVEN FAKE AND KEVIN FUNK

The mice would be disciplined and the lions would be free," said a Mexican delegate to the proceedings that created the U.N. charter in 1945. He astutely predicted the double standards that would govern the application of international law.

The decades since have provided no shortage of examples. In fact, this year began in the midst of a large-scale attack on a civilian population by one of the current lions of the international order — Israel.

Yet in an age when the United States and its allies commonly claim a responsibility "to help protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes

other Western powers shed self-interest and use their military might to enforce humanitarian norms.

Though the idea of disinterested benevolent powers — particularly the United States — roaming the globe in search of humanitarian quandaries to resolve may sound appealing, the factual record surrounding "humanitarian interventions" and appeals to the Responsibility to Protect isn't encouraging.

One telling invocation of the R2P doctrine comes from a confidential memo written in 2003 by the Canadian ambassador to Haiti. In the context of meetings between the United States, France, Canada and the Organization of American States on how to get rid of then-Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the ambassador wrote that



UNPROTECTED: Haitian priest Father Gerard Jean-Juste protests the 2003 U.S.-backed coup in Haiti. PHOTO: DANNY HAMMONTREE

against humanity" — the backbone of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine — no one asked whether killing 1,300 people, mostly civilians, in the Gaza Strip constituted an Israeli failure to protect Palestinians.

That President Obama's foreign policy advisor Samantha Power and other high-octane R2P advocates have not pursued such objectives tells us virtually all we need to know about the doctrine. The notion that major powers make foreign policy decisions based on humanitarian criteria such as protecting besieged populations is a laughable and dangerous myth. U.S. actions in places like Iraq and Afghanistan further demonstrate that powerful states use the R2P concept, whatever its surface and theoretical appeal, as a new bottle for old wine: just a new way to rationalize aggression. Those who harbor delusions to the contrary, however well-meaning, risk feeding support for brutal interventions and occupations that are anything but humanitarian.

R2P first came into the limelight after the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), which was created by the Canadian government and several large foundations in 2000, produced a report on the topic. U.N. delegates at a World Summit in 2005 subsequently endorsed R2P in principle.

However, the origins of R2P go back much further. In essence, R2P is an application of the longer-standing "humanitarian intervention" ideal. This ideology, which has at its core the notion that states can and should intervene to stop and/or prevent serious human rights abuses, is said to represent a new and enlightened era in world affairs, when the United States and

Ottawa was considering sidelining Aristide under the pretext of a "duty to protect." That is, Canada planned to protect the poor Haitian majority from the leader they had twice voted in overwhelming numbers to elect, the same leader who challenged an international economic order that had forced Haitian peasants to subsist on cookies made out of cooking oil and mud. In 2004, a U.S.- and Canadian-backed coup removed the threat of Haiti's good example, with Aristide claiming that he was kidnapped by U.S. troops and subsequently thrown on a plane to Africa, where he remains in exile some five years later (See pages 10-11).

One may recall, in a further example, Bush's impassioned pleas for world opinion to support our supposed liberation of suffering Afghans from the evil yoke of the Taliban, and particularly his feigned interest in freeing Afghan women. Likewise, once obvious falsehoods about ties to al-Qaeda and nonexistent WMD programs became too discredited to trot out in public, Washington began justifying its invasion and occupation of Iraq on humanitarian grounds — our responsibility to protect Iraqis first from Saddam Hussein, and then from themselves.

If serious about human rights, U.S. peace activists could reconceive R2P as the "Responsibility to Protect [Iraqis and Afghans] by withdrawing," or "R2PbW."

It is simply disingenuous to promote our Responsibility to Protect when we cannot even live up to our even more basic "responsibility to do no harm."

Steven Fake and Kevin Funk are co-authors of The Scramble for Africa. This article was excerpted from a longer version originally published by Foreign Policy In Focus.

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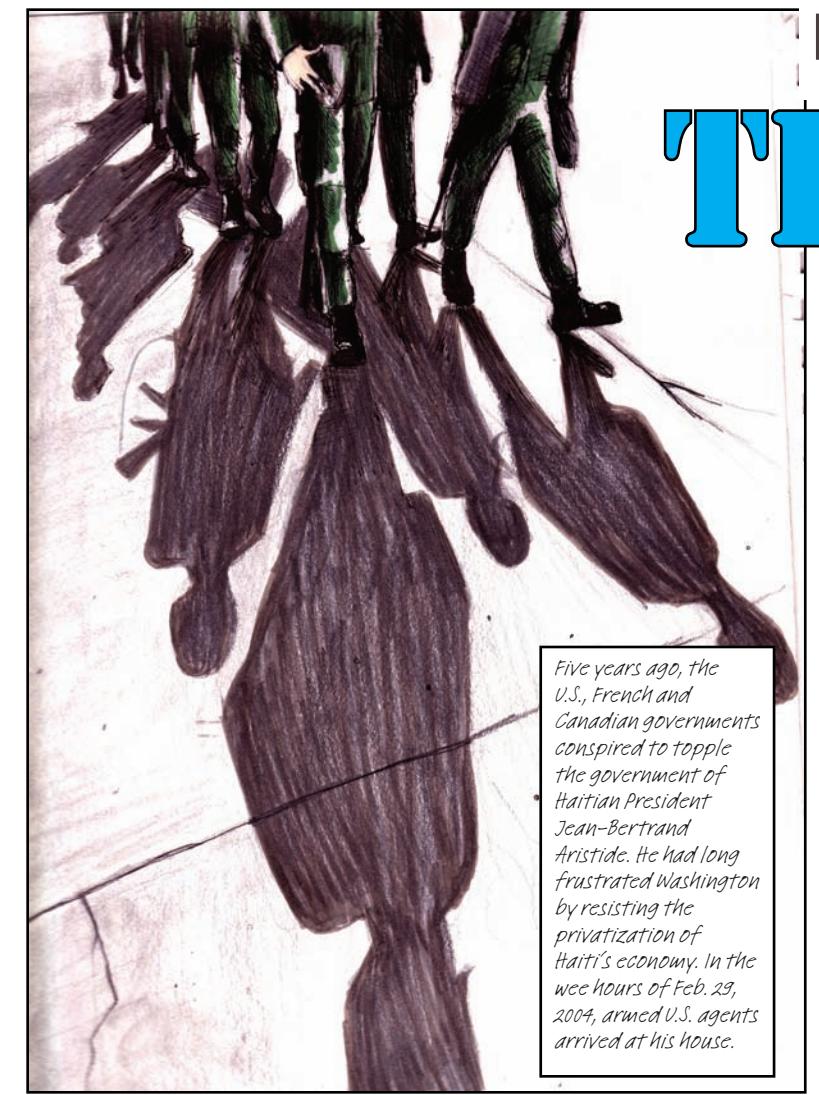
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AUTHENTIC DEMOCRACY AND INDIVIDUAL SELF- REALIZATION. LONG
MAY IT FLOURISH! -NOAM CHOMSKY**

Haiti & the Secret Trial Run of a New Humanitarian Doctrine

THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT?

by Isabel Macdonald

TO



Five years ago, the U.S., French and Canadian governments conspired to topple the government of Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. He had long frustrated Washington by resisting the privatization of Haiti's economy. In the wee hours of Feb. 29, 2004, armed U.S. agents arrived at his house.



Aristide was forced onto a U.S.-government-chartered plane and flown to the Central African Republic. Meanwhile, U.S. Marines – along with French and Canadian troops – invaded Haiti. The foreign backers of this coup d'état justified Aristide's ouster by invoking the international community's humanitarian "duty to protect" civilians. This was the first test of a new Western doctrine, known as the "Responsibility to Protect," (R2P) to justify armed intervention.

But the protection of civilians was not the first order of business after Aristide's ouster.
U.S. Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Roger Noriega
We will... encourage the government of Haiti to move forward... with restructuring and privatization of some public sector enterprises.

The Transitional Government installed following the coup won the praise of the World Bank as a window of opportunity for implementing economic governance reforms... that may be hard for a future government to undo.¹ The new U.S.-backed regime embraced the neoliberal agenda that Aristide had long resisted, signing on to a foreign-drafted plan calling for greater private sector participation in all of Haiti's remaining state-owned enterprises.

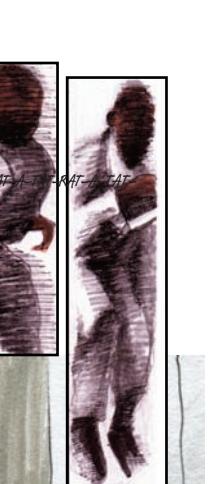
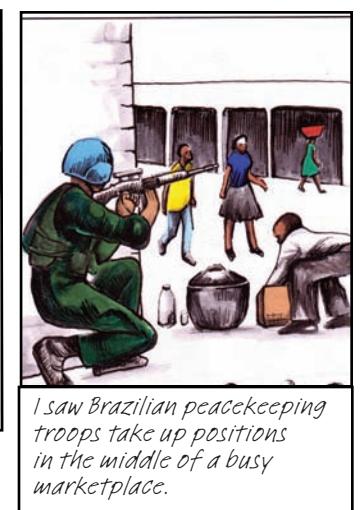
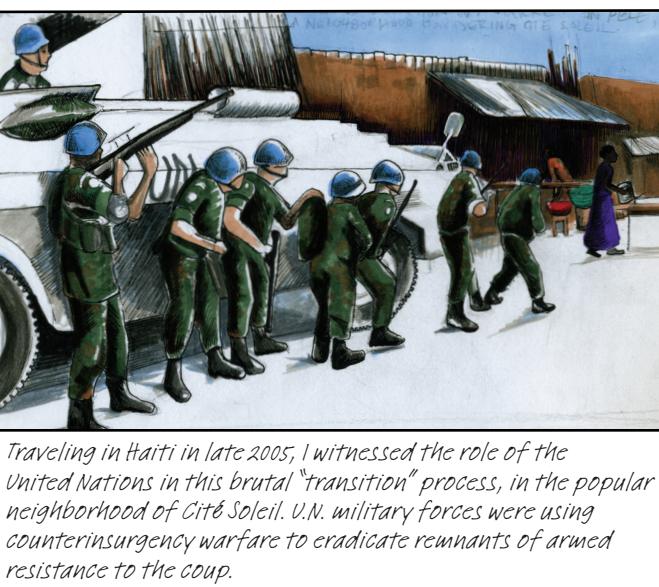
In the first step toward the privatization that has proceeded apace ever since, thousands of public sector workers were fired in the months following the coup.

Privatization of Haiti's education and health services also moved along rapidly.
Now how am I going to be able to afford to pay for my kids to go to school?

Meanwhile, corporations benefited from a complete tax holiday under the "transitional" regime, as well as from the transitional government's reversal of a recent increase to Haiti's meager minimum wage implemented under Aristide.



More than 8,000 residents in Haiti's capital city Port-au-Prince were murdered during the World Bank's "window of opportunity" – most of them at the hands of government forces. Popular neighborhoods where resistance was strongest were subjected to the harshest treatment, such as deadly police raids.



Traveling in Haiti in late 2005, I witnessed the role of the United Nations in this brutal "transition" process, in the popular neighborhood of Cité Soleil. U.N. military forces were using counterinsurgency warfare to eradicate remnants of armed resistance to the coup.



This amnesia seemed to be most thoroughly epitomized by Obama's appointment of Susan Rice as the U.N. ambassador who, a year after Haiti, the world's first black republic, became a testing ground for R2P, advocated bombing Sudan. Arguing for R2P to be used as a framework for a Darfur intervention, Rice lamented that the international community had never been willing to act militarily in the name of protecting African lives.



U.N. Security Council Meeting, Jan. 29, 2009
U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations
Susan Rice
The international community has a responsibility to protect civilian populations from violations of international humanitarian law when states are unwilling or unable to do so... The United States takes this responsibility very seriously.



BY JOSEPH HUFF-HANNON

When the editorial staff of *Semana*, a feisty Bogotá-based weekly news magazine, was closing out their Feb. 21 edition, they couldn't help but notice an unmarked car parked for several hours in front of their building. This came as no surprise to editor-in-chief Alfonso Cuéllar, who supervised a six-month long investigation of illegal wiretapping by Colombia's domestic intelligence agency, the Administrative Department of Security, known in Colombia as the DAS.

"We knew that both the good guys and the bad guys were aware that we were working on the story," said Cuéllar in a recent interview from Bogotá. "That's partly why the DAS was shredding all of the evidence a

fight back," said Hanan Herzberg, TraceSpan founder and CEO, in a press release for the product. "The system's small footprint makes it an ideal solution for any law enforcement agency as well as the perfect solution for the Central Office."

This wouldn't be the first time that U.S.-supplied intelligence gear was used by the Colombian government. In 2006, the U.S. State Department awarded a \$5 million contract to California-based Oakley Networks to provide "Internet surveillance software" to a specialized unit of Colombia's National Police. The details of that deal emerged when the National Police were accused of spying on a variety of Colombian human-rights groups, as well as U.S.-based interfaith organization, Fellowship of Reconciliation. Oakley Networks,

the possibility of a U.S.-Colombian "free trade" agreement — a deal Obama opposed on the campaign trail.

In Bogotá, U.S. embassy officials have not denied playing a role in the Colombian spy operation.

"We have worked with the Administrative Department of Security (DAS) in joint and regional counter-narcotics efforts in a positive and straightforward manner, including providing equipment," states a diplomatic official at the embassy. "We have no knowledge that any equipment has been misused."

Semana's Alfonso Cuéllar says he hopes the paper's report will put an end to illegal spying.

"I think that one thing we found in our



Colombia Calling THE OTHER WIRETAP SCANDAL

month before it broke." Backed up by numerous sources and documents, *Semana* exposed how members of the DAS were illegally spying on Supreme Court judges, former Colombian president César Gaviria, opposition politicians, prominent journalists and even high-ranking members of the ruling party.

Amongst a roster of Machiavellian allegations — from KGB-like tactics used to create "vice files" on prominent politicians, to the selling of sensitive intelligence to narcotics traffickers and those with links to illegal paramilitary organizations and the National Liberation Army (ELN) guerrillas — is one charge that will be of particular interest to the United States, especially as the country contemplates the fallout from its own domestic surveillance scandal. The U.S. government, according to the *Semana* report, supplied the sophisticated interception devices used by the spies in Colombia.

NOT EVERYBODY IS SO AGNOSTIC

"It will be interesting to see if the rumors that are circulating in Bogotá, that the U.S. Embassy had a role in the wiretapping operation, turn out to be true," said Joseph Fitsanakis, senior editor of *IntelNews* and a longtime intelligence analyst. "It won't be the first time."

According to sources in Bogotá, the DAS used a system called Phantom 3000, marketed by a company called TraceSpan Communications, a private U.S. company with a development center in Israel. "In this age of high security threats, when foreign terrorists and local criminals use the Internet for communication, TraceSpan is proud to provide Law Enforcement Authorities a new means to

now a subsidiary of the U.S. defense contractor Raytheon Co., bills itself as a "leader in insider threat monitoring and investigations," that offers "sophisticated monitoring and discovery technologies."

The Oakley Networks contract came as part of the more than \$5 billion the United States has sent to Colombia since 2000 to fund Plan Colombia, ostensibly an effort to eradicate production of the coca leaf. The funding has continued despite the Colombian military's ties to right-wing paramilitary groups and to the killing of union leaders, human rights activists and indigenous people.

U.S. REMAINS A KEY FRIEND

In Bogotá, the ramifications of the *Semana* investigation were immediate. The offices of the DAS were raided by the Colombian prosecutor general's office, the day following *Semana*'s original story, and the agency's director general, Capt. Jorge Alberto Lagos, resigned the following week. The entire high command of the agency submitted letters of resignation and Colombia's attorney general recently declared that 22 DAS detectives had been fired and would face "judicial and administrative investigations," while also intimating that more dismissals are coming down the pike. Colombian President Álvaro Uribe, for years the Bush administration's staunchest ally in Latin America, quickly denied any role in the imbroglio and declared that wiretapping would be immediately reassigned to the National Police. As this was the third such scandal in the DAS under Uribe's watch, not everybody is taking the denial at face value.

The scandal broke just four months after the former head of the DAS resigned after admitting it spied on a prominent leftist politician who had exposed ties between Uribe and right-wing death squads.

"I don't think it's a very plausible argument that these were just low-level characters in the DAS, who were setting up these illegal wiretaps on their own initiative," said Lorenzo Morales, online editor at *Semana*. "The DAS receives its orders directly from the [Colombian] president and his inner circle."

The spy scandal does not appear to have dampened U.S.-Colombian relations. *Semana* broke the story just before Colombia sent a high-level delegation to meet with Obama administration officials. On Feb. 25, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton welcomed Colombian Foreign Minister Jaime Bermúdez Merizalde by saying, "It's a real pleasure to have the representative of a country that has made so many strides and so much progress, and we have a lot to talk about because there is so much we have in common to work on." Less than two months later, at the Summit of the Americas, President Barack Obama sat next to Uribe and discussed

investigation, at least amongst the DAS officials, was that some of these guys don't think there's anything wrong with this, they think it's normal," he said. "They say, what's wrong with checking out people that could be potential enemies of the state, or adversaries of the president? Hopefully, one of the things these revelations will get people thinking about is that no, this is not normal."

Joseph Huff-Hannon is an independent journalist based in Brooklyn who writes on politics and culture.

U.S. FUNDS SPYING ON U.S. PEACE GROUP IN COLOMBIA

A coalition of U.S. organizations have called on the U.S. embassy in Bogotá to pressure Colombian officials to stop spying on human rights and peace organizations.

Between 2006 and 2008, Colombian agencies reportedly intercepted more than 150 email accounts of groups including the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the oldest interfaith peace organization in the United States.

"[This] puts at risk our field team and the communities we work with, by suggesting that those working for peace and human rights are subversive, legitimate targets for right-wing violence," said John Lindsay-Poland, co-director of the Fellowship's Task Force on Latin America.

The spy operation began after the U.S. State Department awarded a \$5 million contract to the California-based Oakley Networks to provide "internet surveillance software" to the intelligence unit of the Colombian National Police as part of Plan Colombia.

"U.S. taxpayers were apparently paying for Colombian agencies to spy on legitimate U.S. and Colombian humanitarian organizations," wrote the authors of a December 2008 letter to U.S. Ambassador William Brownfield in Bogotá.

In addition, the Fellowship of Reconciliation fears a June 2007 break-in at the organization's Bogotá office was connected to the surveillance campaign.

"We've also now learned that the Colombian military paid for computer hard drives of interest to intelligence agencies ... These stolen laptops contained sensitive files on our work with members of Colombian peace communities," Lindsay-Poland said.

—MIKE BURKE

U.S. EYES COLOMBIA FOR NEW BASE

The Obama administration is quietly moving towards expanding the U.S. military's presence in Latin America by setting up a new U.S. military base in Colombia.

The Pentagon's 2010 budget request includes \$46 million to make Colombia's Pañuelo Air Base a "cooperative security location."

The funding request appears to confirm reports that the United States plans to move its main Latin American base from Manta, Ecuador, to Colombia.

U.S. troops are scheduled to vacate the Manta base this year after Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa refused to renew the lease.

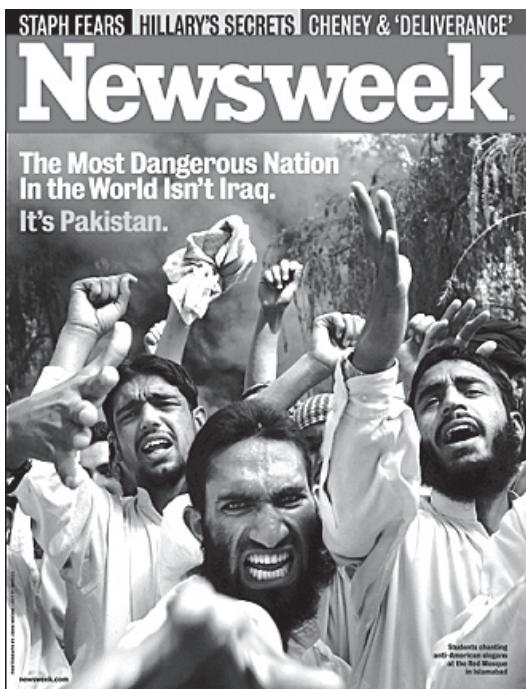
John Lindsay-Poland of the Fellowship of Reconciliation told *The Indypendent* the Pentagon's funding request was "very alarming."

"The base in Colombia will host or be able to host C-17s for missions throughout the whole continent," Lindsay-Poland said. "The U.S. is looking to create an intervention capacity throughout Latin America."

The Pentagon is also aiming to expand into other countries in the region.

"The objective of the Department of Defense is to develop a series of access agreements for contingency operations, logistics and training in Central and South America and we are discussing arrangements to increase our access in several countries in the region," notes the Pentagon's budget request summary.

—MIKE BURKE



Why Pakistan Will Not Become a Theocracy

BY MANAN AHMED

Times are bleak for the state of Pakistan, if the international media is to be believed. Since April, the world's newspapers have charted the apparently unstoppable march of the Taliban toward Islamabad — with daily reminders that their forces are "only 100 miles" and then "only 80 miles" and then "only 60 miles" from the capital. That Pakistan is a "failed state" or "on the brink" no longer even requires elaboration: it is the universal consensus among pundits and "area experts" alike.

News articles have begun to game out the fall of the regime: *The New York Times*, hardly alone in its hyperventilating, has run two stories in as many weeks about America courting the opposition leader Nawaz Sharif as a replacement for Asif Ali Zardari's government. The counterinsurgency guru David Kilcullen, a former adviser to U.S. General David Petraeus, has suggested that the state could fail within six months, while Petraeus himself warns that the coming weeks will be decisive, and that the army may have to return to power to prevent a total collapse.

The notion of Pakistan as a "failed state" has roots far deeper than the last few years; it was first deemed to have "failed" in the early 1960s, and this framework has dominated discussion of Pakistan in America from the days of the Cold War to the War on Terror. The surprisingly long history of the rhetoric of failure reveals that for the United States, the solution to Pakistan's problems has always been, and will always be, the strong hand of a military ruler.

The "failed state" rubric dominated the 1990s, as Pakistan became a nuclear power while stagnating economically under the burden of crippling foreign debt. But the attacks of September 11 brought Pakistan back into the American fold as a "close ally in the War on Terror," under the leadership of Pervez Musharraf, who took power in a 1999 coup. If Pakistan was on the brink of failure, few in America wanted to talk about it — at least until 2007, when Musharraf's firing of the chief justice sparked street protests that eventually led to his resignation. The exiled leaders Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif returned to contest the state's first democratic elections in more than a decade. Then the floodgates opened: a *Newsweek* cover story in October 2007 dubbed Pakistan, "The most dangerous nation in the world", nicely setting the tone for everything we've heard since.

This tendency to reduce Pakistan's complexity to either "failure" or "stability" reflects, above all, a glaring poverty of knowledge about the real lives of 175 million Pakistanis today. Since 2007 alone, they removed a dictator from military and civilian power without firing a single shot, held the first national election since 1997

— in which right-wing radical parties were soundly rejected — and launched a secular movement for justice.

None of this matters, we are told, because Pakistan is facing "an existential threat" from "violent extremists," as a U.S. State Department spokesman said. U.S. generals and media commentators are hinting that a military takeover may be the only way to arrest the imminent "failure" — to combat the "Talibanisation" of Pakistan and keep the dreaded nukes from "falling into the hands" of terrorist groups.

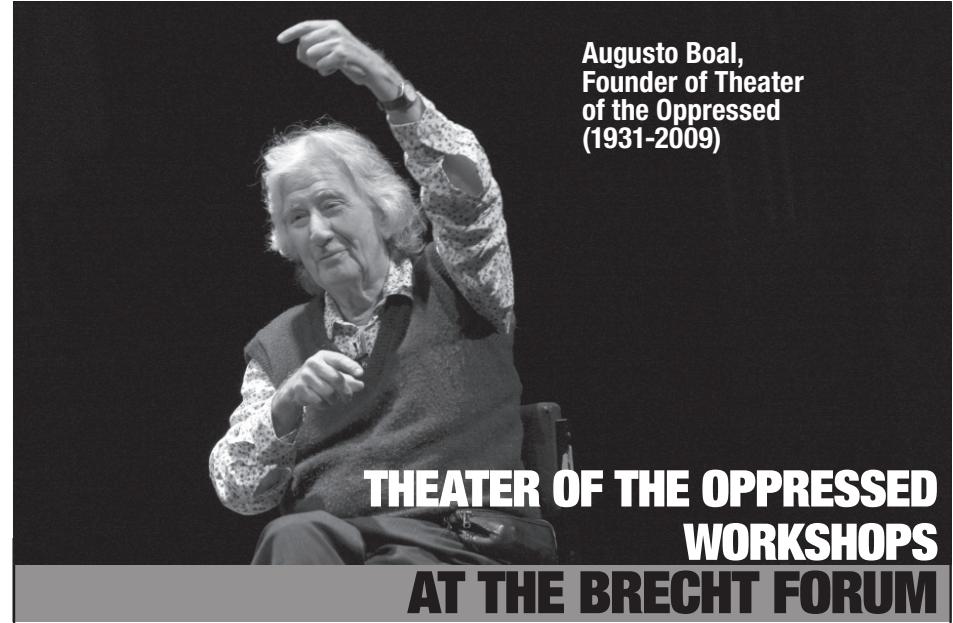
A comically exaggerated version of reality underpins such concerns. There are roughly 400 to 500 Pakistani Taliban fighters in the Buner region (the area deemed too threateningly close to Islamabad) and 15,000 to 20,000 operating in the region between Peshawar and the north-west borders of Pakistan. Meanwhile, the number of active Pakistani army personnel ranges around 500,000, supported by an annual budget of approximately \$4 billion.

Pakistan is neither Somalia nor Sudan, nor even Iraq or Afghanistan. It is a thoroughly modern state with vast infrastructure, a fiercely critical and diverse media, an active, global economy and strong ties with regional powers such as China and Iran. It is not a "failed state."

Even if Pakistan is not going to capitulate to the Taliban, it does face grave dangers, and the "failed state" rhetoric — dangerous in its own right — forces our attention away from them. In Baluchistan, as a direct result of Musharraf's heavy-handed military policies, a civil war has been brewing since 2005, and there is no military solution to that unrest. At the same time, anti-Americanism is rising across the country in reaction to the campaign of missile strikes from unmanned U.S. drones, which have killed nearly 1,000 civilians since August 2008. The drones have emboldened religious conservatives who decry "U.S. imperialism" at work in Pakistan, and they are gaining strength with every tally of civilian casualties.

The monotonous drone of "failure" implies that the fragile democracy currently in place is not worth preserving. It encourages the marginalization of the civilian government and boosts the claims of both the military and the militants. Pakistan's salvation has never been and will never be in the military's hands. The country's future lies with the millions of Pakistanis who are working to sustain democracy — and what must be defended is their resilience and strength, to prevent the self-fulfilling prophecies of failure.

Manan Ahmed is a historian of Islam in South Asia at the University of Chicago. He blogs at Chapati Mystery. This article was excerpted from an article originally published in The National, a publication based in the United Arab Emirates.



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Of Swine and Men

BY LAURA S. BOYLAN

While there is no conclusive evidence, ground zero for the current swine flu pandemic may be in the southern Mexican town of La Gloria. La Gloria is in Perote, a valley high in the mountains of Veracruz state and home to Granjas Carroll de Mexico (GCM), which operates the country's largest industrial pig farms. La Gloria is also the site of Mexico's first confirmed case of swine flu, 5-year-old Edgar Hernández.

Swine flu has long existed in U.S. pigs, and in recent years there has been a rise in novel strains that may be more dangerous to people. Pigs can serve as "mixing vessels" for viral strains from different species. There have been sporadic cases of swine flu in humans in the United States since 2005. Prior to the current outbreak, cases were associated with physical proximity to pigs. Many have raised concerns that the increasing dominance of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) may pose a risk to human health by promoting the emergence of novel viral strains.

Epidemic origins are typically elusive. The two swine flu cases identified earliest were in the United States. Special testing was performed on the first case because he was participating in a clinical trial of a new test. The second patient's sample was identified because the clinic he went to was participating in a special influenza surveillance project. By the time the H1N1 virus was identified in the United States, two children in La Gloria had died and over a thousand were ill with an unidentified febrile respiratory illness. Ultimately only 30 samples were sent for an analysis that could identify swine flu, and one of these was positive.

Local public health officials and GCM contend that Edgar's case of swine flu was isolated and that it is a coincidence that La Gloria, a town of 3,000, is five miles downwind of GCM. No one in La Gloria works at the pig factory. The company says no pigs or workers have been ill. However, GCM facilities have undergone no independent inspection as of early May.

Significant efforts have been made to divert attention from any health threat from GCM (50 percent of which is owned by Smithfield Foods, Inc., the Virginia-based hog-producing giant).

The story of Granjas Carroll de Mexico is a cautionary tale of the public health risks of intermingling swine, money and power.

Pigs produce vast amounts of excrement. One CAFO with 850,000 pigs will discharge more excrement than all the residents of Manhattan (GCM produced nearly one million pigs in 2008). Waste is pumped into lake-sized "lagoons" that hold up to 25 million gallons. Improperly handled wastes and use of contaminated water for barn cleaning promotes swine flu and interspecies viral mixing. Proper waste handling, however, is expensive. Smithfield has been fined or cited repeatedly for bad practices in the United States, Romania, and Poland.

Veracruz' head of public health services initially blamed the outbreak in La Gloria on the weather, poor plumbing, poor diet and villagers' failure to decontaminate their



JACLYN SINQUETT

water properly. He did acknowledge that there were so many flies in La Gloria that it was advisable to cover one's mouth. Flies, while not considered a traditional vector for influenza, can harbor avian flu.

Villagers have protested GCM for years and many believe it's the source of the current pandemic. In 2006 villagers from 30 communities traveled to the state capital to demonstrate, carrying photos of pig carcasses festering in the open. They spoke of swarms of flies and feral dogs consuming carcasses, and complained of improper waste handling and contamination of their water supply by the lagoons of excrement.

When local officials and villagers attempted to tour GCM in 2006, it ended in an altercation between a security guard and a congressional deputy. GCM filed charges against the deputy. A delegation from Mexico City toured the operations and issued a report citing improper waste processing, failure to cover the lagoons and contamination of the local water supply.

When GCM announced plans to expand locally, residents demonstrated and blockaded a road. In the face of ongoing complaints, expansion was put on hold.

Residents who complained about GCM say they have been followed and threatened. GCM filed libel charges against many and accused some of obstructing communications due to alleged participation in the road blockade. Some were silenced.

Veronica Hernández Arguello, a teacher, filed a complaint about harassment with the public ministry. No action resulted. To date, according to Hernández, GCM has filed three lawsuits against her, and 14 other locals have also been sued.

GCM finally expanded its operations in January 2009 after donating about \$36,000 to a forestry project named after the governor of Veracruz.

Even after the outbreak of respiratory illness in February, it was only following reports of an "atypical" infection in a neighboring state that public health authorities

Also on April 27, the head of the Veracruz agency responsible for inspecting GCM admitted no such inspection had occurred for at least a year. The federal government admitted that it was unknown whether many problems previously identified had been resolved. There was no specific plan other than to review materials presented by GCM.

Recently a reporter from *The Guardian* found many villagers would only speak on the condition of anonymity. One man warned, "This is a company with lots of power and lots of dollars. They have always been protected by the government and there is not much we can do about it."

There is fear in La Gloria and for good reason.

In Veracruz, journalists investigate government corruption at their own peril. Two months ago a journalist was left in a coma by brain injuries sustained while fleeing an armed ex-official he had written about. In 2007, five military-grade bullets smeared in red paint and wrapped in newspaper pages containing articles critical of the government were left on the doorstep of the newspaper's editor.

When public interests are subservient to private interests, public health will suffer. The repercussions in this case may be global. The CDC's Dr. Scott Dowell said if officials had blitzed the La Gloria region in mid-March with anti-viral drugs, the outbreak might have been contained.

Perhaps even more importantly, information vital to understanding present and future global pandemics may have been permanently lost by failure to collect data in a timely fashion.

There has been plenty of time to cremate any suspicious porcine evidence. Any "smoking gun" may simply have gone up in smoke.

Laura S. Boylan, MD, is a practicing neurologist, faculty member at the New York University School of Medicine, and board member of Physicians for a National Health Program Metro NY.

A VOICE FROM THE HEART OF BOLIVIA



Indydependent contributor Liza Minno Bloom is on the ground in Bolivia and had a chance to talk with human rights activist Oscar Olivera May 1 about organizing factory workers, the water and gas wars and solidarity with people in the Global North.

Exclusive interview online at indydependent.org.

For a Woman on the 6 Train



GABRIELLA SZPUNT

BY BILLY WHARTON

I admit to being a thick-skinned New Yorker. After nearly 40 years living here, there is little that can happen in this city that would evoke an emotional response. This is particularly true in the subways. Rats run across the tracks. People

commit any number of lewd public acts on a daily basis. Just a month ago, a drunken fellow passenger decided to convert the subway into a urinal. Fleeing passengers seemed to revel more in the spontaneous camaraderie of the experience than disgust in the offensive act. Things changed during a recent ride on the 6 train.

In the past few months, there has been a noticeable difference in the homeless population I have encountered above and below ground. Most New Yorkers (myself included) have become accustomed to the city created during the violent regime of former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. Intent on enforcing his "quality of life" agenda, Giuliani used the police to drive the homeless out of public view. The severity of the economic crisis is reversing this. The homeless are back in New York City. There are more homeless, many more — new people with fewer of the habits and appearances of hardened street people.

On April 3, I rode the 6 train downtown to participate in a protest against Wall Street. A woman entered the train at 42nd Street. She appeared to be in her late 20s, neatly dressed, with all appearances of a sturdy working-class person. Noticeably pregnant, she had a clean jacket, relatively new shoes and neat hair. As she sat down, I and others noticed a handwritten note clipped to her bag. It read, "I have a six-year-old girl. I am pregnant. We have been

forced into a homeless shelter. Please, God help." She sat with a hand out monthly looking for donations.

The role of a public beggar was too much for her to handle. After a few moments, she began to sob. She cried deeply, the kind of crying normally reserved for the most intense, private moments in your life. Tears streamed down her cheeks. We were witnessing the destruction of another human being's identity — her self-respect poured out one tear at a time. Passengers tried to help by placing dollar bills in her hand or offering a tissue to wipe her face. Dollars and tissues could not solve this problem.

I sat across from her, paralyzed. Sure, I was off to a demonstration to condemn the economic crisis that likely forced her and her children into the street, but what could I do immediately? I left the train quite shaken. As it pulled away from the platform, I turned to catch a final glimpse of the woman slumped in the seat, still crying.

This woman is not alone. Homelessness is clearly on the rise in New York City. The city's Department of Homeless Services has reported a more than 20 percent increase in requests for shelter each month since September. Food pantries throughout the city are reporting high demand and declining donations as the economic crisis deepens. Scheduled budget cuts will simply accelerate

the problem. Mayor Michael Bloomberg plans to cut a program that offers mediation between distressed tenants and landlords to prevent homelessness. If it wasn't bad enough, Bloomberg also proposes to cut the home cleaning products provided to people leaving the shelter system.

No need for a socialist sermon here. The situation this woman has been put in is a clear illustration of the inhumane currency of capitalism. Destroying her self-esteem and endangering her children, born and unborn, does nothing to improve society. It dehumanizes everyone by forcing us to rationalize things like human suffering brought on by homelessness.

There are, however, those of us who refuse to see something rational or inevitable in this woman's condition. For this woman on the 6 train I dedicate my mind, my hands and my heart to building a democratic socialist society in which she can enjoy guarantees to things like housing, healthcare and useful work. This would be a new social basis of freedom from which to build an identity. In the meantime, the economic crisis will produce many more instances of human degradation. The choice is ours: Grow thicker skin or more justice.

Billy Wharton is the editor of the Socialist Webzine. His article, "Obama is No Socialist. I Should Know," appeared in the Washington Post March 15.

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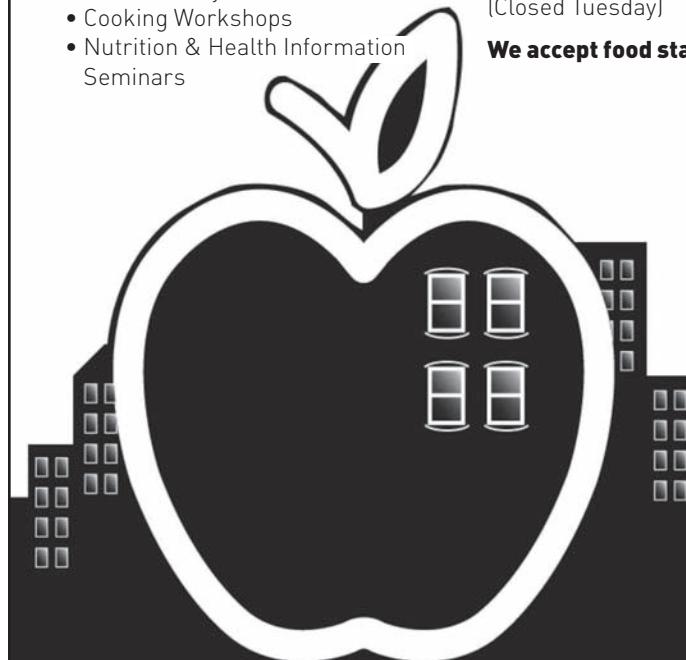
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RECLAIMING EINSTEIN

New Book Reveals Famed Scientist as an Opponent of Israel



Einstein on Zionism and Israel: His Provocative Ideas About the Middle East

BY FRED JEROME
ST. MARTIN'S PRESS, MAY 2009

Countless books and articles have been written about the life of the great physicist and thinker Albert Einstein, and since his death in 1955, a near consensus has existed that Einstein was a staunch supporter of the state of Israel.

Veteran journalist Fred Jerome uses hundreds of pages of Einstein's own letters, articles and interviews — many published for the first time — to refute this thesis.

It is well known that Einstein, a German Jew, witnessed European anti-Semitism firsthand and spoke out against both prejudice and Nazism. These experiences convinced Einstein to support Zionism and a Jewish homeland. After gaining immense fame for his scientific breakthroughs, he was offered the presidency of Is-

rael in 1952 after the death of the country's first president, Chaim Weizmann.

In reality, while Einstein was sympathetic to the Zionist cause, he repeatedly warned that a "narrow nationalism" may arise if a Jewish-only state was founded and peaceful co-existence with the Palestinians was not achieved. Instead, Einstein advocated Cultural Zionism — the creation of Jewish cultural and educational centers within a bi-national state with equal rights for both Arabs and Jews.

When Einstein was offered the Israeli presidency, Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion stated, "I've had to offer him the post because it was impossible not to, but if he accepts we are in for trouble." In a letter written in the same year, Einstein compared the Zionists' project with that of the Pilgrims, noting, "how tyrannical, intolerant and aggressive [they] became after a short while." And in Einstein's last media interview, which ran in the *New York Post* a

month before his death, he stated "We had great hopes for Israel at first. We thought it might be better than other nations, but it is no better."

Jerome has authored two previous books about Einstein; *The Einstein File: J. Edgar Hoover's Secret War Against the World's Most Famous Scientist* and *Einstein on Race and Racism*, co-authored with Rodger Taylor. These books are essential to understanding Einstein, a self-described "revolutionary," who publicly stated that he would use his fame and celebrity status to bring attention to the causes important to him. For example, *Einstein on Race and Racism* details for the first time Einstein's 20-year friendship with Paul Robeson. While the first two books were aimed at filling a large gap in the knowledge about Einstein's radical beliefs and political activism, *Einstein on Zionism and Israel* seeks to debunk the myth that Einstein was a supporter of Israel.

In the process, Jerome reveals much about the nature of mainstream propaganda. Einstein's opposition to Israel was widely known and reported on during his life. In fact, the myth of Einstein's support of Israel was born the day after Einstein's death in his obituary in *The New York Times*, which shamelessly wrote that he "championed" the establishment of the Jewish state. This contradicted decades of reporting from the "Paper of Record." Jerome provides some examples, including a 1930 article headlined "Einstein attacks British Zion Policy," a 1938 article stating Einstein was "Against Palestine State" and a 1946 article stating Einstein "Bars Jewish State."

The book ends with a quote from author and intellectual Gore Vidal, "The only question that really matters: Why?" Jerome follows with, "Why have we not known?"

—JAISAL NOOR

The New York Society of Ethical Culture will host a reception to celebrate the release of Einstein on Zionism and Israel May 28, 6:30 p.m. 2 West 64th Street in Manhattan. The event is free.

The Indypendent's Jaisal Noor sat down with author Fred Jerome to discuss why Albert Einstein is remembered for his physics and not his politics.

JAISAL NOOR: Why did you decide to write this book on Einstein and his views on Israel and Zionism?

FRED JEROME: When Einstein met Paul Robeson in 1952, Einstein had just turned down the offer to be president of Israel. According to Lloyd Brown [who was present at that meeting] Einstein told Robeson why he had turned down the invitation: He didn't agree with Israel, with the nationalism, the establishment of the state of Israel, and so on. In both my previous books, there was a brief discussion about Israel. In addition, it is so clearly one of the central issues of today's world. We cannot ignore this issue and pretend to be concerned about the world or people in the world. It seemed logical to me that if I was going to be concerned about what was happening in Israel, particularly the Israeli oppression of the Palestinians ... it would be a logical step to write more on what Einstein had to say. I contacted the Einstein Archives in Jerusalem, and they actually thought it would be a good idea and encouraged me and said that they could provide information that probably had never been published before.

JN: You started with the Einstein Archive in Jerusalem — where else did you go?

FJ: Einstein gave all his papers to the Hebrew University in Jerusalem because he actually helped to found the Hebrew University. As a Cultural Zionist, he was in favor of cultural centers, like universities, but opposed to a Jewish state or nation. I also tried to talk to as many people as possible who talked to Einstein, knew Einstein, who remember Einstein. The most important was [eminent Egyptian journalist] Mohammed Heikel in Cairo. I included this interview, which was certainly never mentioned in any of the more than 100 books on Einstein.

JN: Could you describe the reaction the press had to your previous works on Einstein and the reaction you expect from this one?

FJ: The press's reaction to the first book, *The Einstein File* [2002], was one of very significant interest, maybe because J. Edgar Hoover had fallen out of favor with the media in the past 20 years. And so you have a bad guy versus a good guy, Einstein being the good guy. He had just been named Person of the Century by *Time Magazine* in the year 2000 when I was working on the first book, and I had come up with this file that no one else had — the entire file. So it was a combination of new information and kind of a sexy theme. Then *The New York Times* devoted a full page of its science section when the book first came out — that helped get the book covered by lots of other media outlets.

When the book *Einstein on Race and Racism* [2006] came out, there was virtually no coverage in the mainstream media. There was some coverage in the Black press, including the *Amsterdam News*, some of the websites and so on. *Publisher's Weekly* did a review in which they said that it was a good book, was well written, well researched, no complaints, no criticisms. Einstein was a race man, but so what? Six months after the book came out *The New York Times* finally did do a review of the book, a very favorable review of the book, and published it only in the New Jersey edition, which has very few readers compared to their other editions.

So the contrast was striking. I think primarily because the mainstream media in America really don't want to write about racism in America and certainly don't want to identify Einstein with an anti-racist position. The other reason the media have ignored this book is that part of the book is Einstein's friendship with Paul Robeson and while they finally did put Paul Robeson on a postage stamp, after much struggle and protest, clearly the mainstream media and the corporate interests they represent are still afraid of Paul Robeson's leftism, his socialism, activism, the resistance to them he represented. Outside of the mainstream media it has gotten a very positive reaction. [Co-author] Rodger Taylor and I are still getting invited to speak, five years after the book was published, by students and other groups around the country. But the media reaction was clearly "don't touch it."

And my anticipation for this book is that most of the mainstream media will have the same reaction to this book, because I think that their attitude on Israel-Palestine for the most part is well over 150 percent support for Washington's total backing of the Israeli government. They have been saying in the mainstream media that Einstein was a big supporter of Israel, and they have been saying that since the day he died, over 60 years ago. They never said it while he was alive.

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Indypendent book reviewer
Eleanor J. Bader takes a look at
Juan Cole's new book, *Engaging
the Muslim World*.

A glimpse of Israel is seen
between the branches in the film
Lemon Tree, reviewed by Judith
Mahoney Paternak.



TIM DURNING

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

Soul music disappeared from the national pop charts around the time Al Green got religion in the mid-1970s, but it retains a loyal following. Northern rock scenesters seek out records by the late Nathaniel Mayer or Sharon Jones and the Dap-Kings. In the South, there's still a significant Afro-American audience at the roots, working-class adults who worry about the price of gas, love sex and occasionally cheat — or at least think about it enough to consider the consequences.

Donnie Ray's *Caught by the Cat*, Ms. Jody's *It's a Ms. Jody Thang*, and O.B. Buchana's *Southern Soul Country Boy*, on the Memphis

label Ecko, are all aimed at that down-home audience. Along with Lee "Shot" Williams, Sweet Angel and Denise LaSalle, they've created a soul-blues motherlode — church-raised voices over burbling basslines and swooping strings, with deep roots in Mississippi blues and an occasional nod to hip-hop.

The sound is soul, but the themes are the eternal verities of the blues: the joy, pain and darkly funny side of male-female relations. Ms. Jody tells a controlling boyfriend that "Loving You Is Like Doing Hard Time." The one who left Sweet Angel for the streets comes home to a smoldering 12/8 slow jam called "Another Man's Meat Is on My Plate." Donnie Ray admits he used to be a skirt-chasing hound dog, but "This Time the Dog

DIGGING THE HEART OF SOUL

Got Caught by the Cat." He also turns in a sardonic couple-fight tune, "Just Give Me My Blues," and a beautifully aching and lush ballad, "Don't Let Your Pride Overpower Your Love." There's also a Nashville-worthy plethora of cheating songs, most notably O.B. Buchana's "Stealing It," which nicks its hook line from Z.Z. Hill's "Love Is So Good When You're Stealing It." The party songs are more generic, but the percolating crunk track, "Ms. Jody Thang," had me bopping in front of the computer.

Ecko calls its music "21st-century blues." But it's not guitar-dominated 12-bar jams; its ancestors are the seventies Memphis soul of Al Green and Johnnie Taylor and the string-soothed soul-blues of Bobby Blue Bland (on his 1961 landmark, *Two Steps from the Blues*) and Z.Z. Hill, who died in 1984, set the template. He penned the classic "Down Home Blues" and advised his male listeners that if they're dating a single mother and she needs help buying the kids a pair of shoes, "don't tell her, 'go ask their daddy, they ain't mine.'" Significantly, Bland and Hill were among the few

blues singers to draw a majority-black audience after 1970.

Like hip-hop, new Southern soul is much more sexually explicit than the old-school version. Aretha Franklin wanted R-E-S-P-E-C-T; the women of Ecko are demanding it in the bedroom. Ms. Jody instructs a lover that "You've Got to Play With It Before You Lay With It." Denise LaSalle tells a promiscuous man that if he wants to satisfy her, "you've got to bone it like you own it." And the men get it: In this vein, Lee "Shot" Williams comes up with the best song title I've heard so far in the 21st century: "Everything I Like to Eat Starts With a 'P'." Over perfectly placed guitar wah-wahs and an electronic beat close to Marvin Gaye's "Inner City Blues," he lists "peaches ... and pears/pineapple, so good to me." You know where this is going.

The records' biggest drawback is that they usually use computerized rhythms, which gives many songs a slightly prefab feel. Yes, recording live drums is expensive and dancers expect drum-machine precision, but live grooves give the extra flavor that makes records

great instead of just very good. Classic Memphis soul rested on the fluid bedrock of bass/drum combos like Duck Dunn and Al Jackson at Stax-Volt and Leroy Hodges and Howard Grimes with Al Green.

Speaking of which, O.V. Wright's 1973 album *Memphis Unlimited* was reissued earlier this year. Imagine a severely depressed Otis Redding backed by Al Green's band. Few singers can wrest as much beauty and passion from despair, and Wright does that brilliantly here, at tempos ranging from Green-style simmering to mournful.

Karl Marx famously wrote that religion was the heart of a heartless world, the opium of the people, and O.V. Wright lived that out. A teenage gospel singer who had several R&B hits in the 1960s and 1970s, he spent his life pursuing bliss through religion, romantic love and drugs. The album closes with the old gospel song "I'm Going Home to Live with God." Wright would be gone from the troubles of this world within a decade, but he left behind some fantastic music.

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The Uncelebrated Beauty of Men's Sexuality

By S. HITE

Pornography, it seems to me, presents a highly distorted image of men. While my research with thousands of men shows a different picture of "who men are sexually," pornography imposes a rigid ideological view on male sexual feelings, expression and behavior. They are not the monolithic beings depicted in most porno images, nor do they find their authentic selves in pornography.

Ironically, pornography seems friendly to men — more than to women — but its underlying message makes fun of men. Subliminally, it tells men that their sexual expression is ridiculous, base, insensitive, even grotesque. Visually it frequently makes men look ugly and coarse, foolish and unappealing.

Who hasn't seen porno images? They're all around us, in magazines, on the internet and even in fine art. The makers and distributors of the images must believe men like them, that they are generally making "what men like," because they market it to men, and the industry is growing. Although few women buy porno, most industry spokespersons claim that "the number of women is increasing"; any gain they refer to is nominal.

Do most men really like pornography? Do they find it laughable or do they think to themselves: I wish I could be like him, lucky guy?

It's difficult to know whether men like the way they are portrayed in porno. If you're male, you're raised with the idea that if you find something revolting, you must look it straight in the eye and say: "Wow! I like it! I'm bad!" Boys are not supposed to shy away from vulgar things; doing that makes them "girlish." Therefore, the more disgusting a pornographic visual is, the more a "real man" should not show disgust. But, privately, do most men really think they are "like that," or do they experience their sexuality as more subtle, more diverse, possibly more erotic and even spiritual? Of course, not all men look at porno, so why is it generally considered for men? Is it because women supposedly don't need to jerk off? Or because the material puts men on top as "the winners," denigrating women as "the losers"?

In porno, there is a subliminal text. Men are almost always presented as predators with erections, almost as rapists. One of the unspoken clichés of porno is that the man must show no feelings, but follow a strictly physical sexual scenario.

Porno portrays men having pleasure focused on erection and ejaculation, rarely seeking eroticism, or other purely sensual activity, for its own sake. And porno rarely presents men in love or sexually active in a non-focused way. It does not show men seeking full-length body contact or needing to hold another person and be held.

BEYOND BIOLOGY

Sexual exuberance, desire, elation, love not satisfied by orgasm, fantasy — these states are about something other than a biological drive to reproduce the species, the "male sex drive" that in pornography is central to sex. Today, male sex drive as a concept has taken on a mystical ring. During the late 20th century this term was used so often that it became "unquestionable truth" and is now assumed to be biological.

But is it? Logically, if men supposedly have a biological drive to "thrust," then shouldn't women have a complementary reverse "drive" to open? Or is the entire idea of "sex drive" a fraudulent ideological category masquerading as scientific fact? What about the other sexual states that men experience, which are not seen in porno? Are men as mechanical and aggressive by nature as they are depicted? Society has tried to insist that a real man should "get hard" at will, whenever appropriate, meaning in a private situation with a reproductively aged female, but it is impossible to will an erection into being.

In truth, the penis is a delicate part of the male being, responding with exquisite sensitivity to every nuance of emotion a man can feel. Erections come and go in men, during sex and during sleep. Most men say they seek desire, not the mechanical means of orgasm or creating erection. Desire and arousal are the pleasures that spread through the body; orgasm, after all, can be attained alone during masturbation. The beauty of male sexuality is not so much about erection. It is about all the gestures and subtle meaningful body movements, including the ups and downs of erection — tumescence and non-tumescence, de-tumescence and re-tumescence — ways in which the body speaks.

These movements represent a man's beauty and personality and are very erotic. Pornography as we know it does not represent that diversity of expression. It often pretends to be avant-garde by being shocking, passing itself off as incredibly open when compared

to the old value system of prudery. But it is not revolutionary. Such images do not address a more valuable and interesting view of who men are sexually.

What is male sexuality? Why is it so closely identified with intercourse in a reproductive scenario?

The answer involves understanding centuries of enforcement of the idea of sex as an animalistic physical desire to be controlled by putting it into a reproductive context within marriage. Yet this ideology contained the seeds of its own destruction by furthering the idea that men's sexuality can only be freely experienced outside the family.

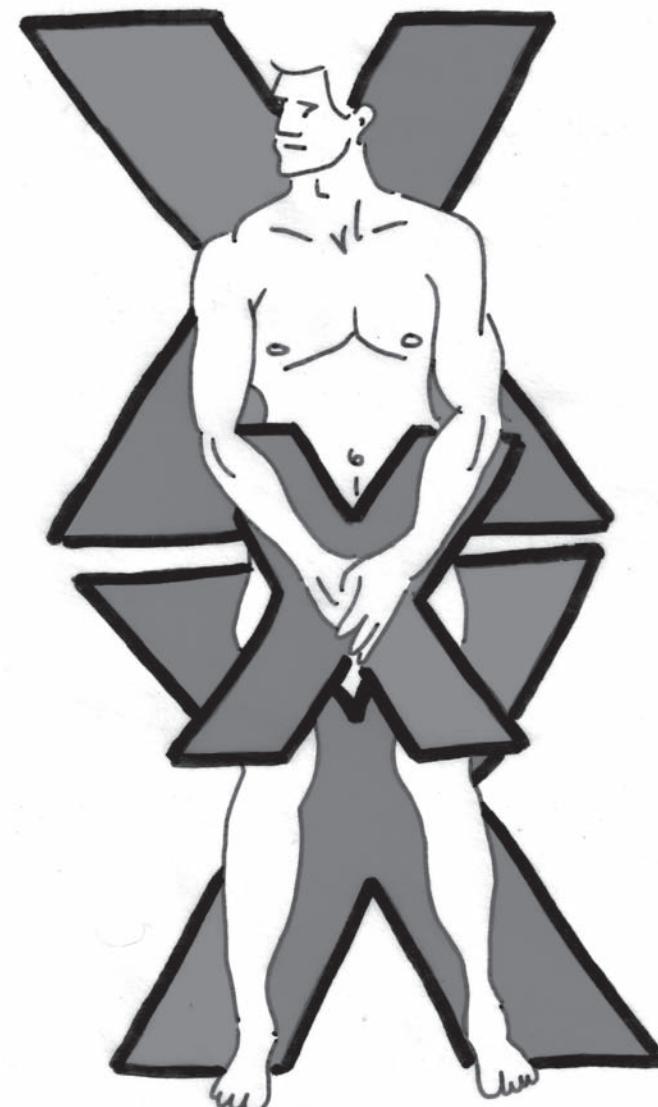
THE MIND-BODY SPLIT

In my research, it seems that the split between "body" and "mind" or "soul" — as pornography depicts — is the crux of the problem men experience, not whether or not they are in a reproductive relationship. The definition of sex created to go with our social order and family structure, originating about 3,000 years ago, has been focused on the reproductive act. This detracts from other activities because we have evolved from a culture that wanted to increase reproduction to one in which most of us use birth control. Men's sexual nature is "polymorphous-perverse," as a *New York Times* book review characterized the picture of men that emerges from *The Hite Report on Male Sexuality*.

Men in my research show great diversity. Take, for example, masturbation. This can allow a man to express his sexuality without a focus on reproduction or coitus. As one man puts it, "I have more or less two sex lives, one with my wife and one with myself."

Men say they enjoy masturbation because they can fantasize about whatever they want and there is no pressure on them to perform. During masturbation, in my research, men stimulate themselves in many more places than they do when with a partner.

And this one: Anal stimulation. In my research, many men express a hidden desire to be caressed and "penetrated" — possibly by a finger — anally, since just inside the anus in men there is proximity to the prostate, which when stimulated can result in orgasm. However, most men do not explore the various feelings they wish to express during sex with a partner, especially a female partner, but instead try to follow the reproductive scenario depicted in most pornography. Our sexual acts have been channeled into too limited a form of expres-



ANDREA COCHLAN

sion; sex could be more interesting if it was not always focused on one scenario: "foreplay" followed by "penetration," the high point being fucking, coitus or "the act." The appearance of Viagra and the fear of HIV have increased rather than decreased the focus on erection. For example, many men are nervous about having to put on a condom and consequently losing their erection or their sexual desire. Not only are men asked to use condoms, they are expected to provide clitoral stimulation to orgasm in many cases.

But many men cut short foreplay because they are afraid they may lose the erection which they have been taught is necessary to enjoy sex and which would be "shameful" to lose. More men could reach much higher peaks of feeling and arousal if they did not feel anxious about how they should behave sexually.

WHAT'S BAD FOR THE GOOSE...

How do men feel about how they are depicted as treating women in pornography and about the violence to women shown in most pornography?

Most men feel perplexed, and wonder why this can excite them. Although pornography frequently denigrates women — showing women beaten, black and blue, and liking it — it also denigrates men. It cheapens and brutalizes their sensibilities, destroying their possibility of personal sexual discovery, blocking their power to express themselves with others and implanting clichés such as "a real

man is the one with the biggest, hardest erection." Pornography's implication that men are beasts whose underlying unchangeable natures make them likely to be violent to women is misleading and dangerous. Porno's messages bisect men psychologically, showing sexuality as separate from emotion and the soul. This can affect men in a very negative way, causing them to think that they are two people — the sexual animal and the thinking, spiritual individual. Pornography is above all propaganda — an ideological construct used to direct men toward a certain style of reproductive sexual activity, to tell them the kind of attitude they should have towards sex and women. Women in pornography serve the basic purpose of legitimizing the male sexual expression.

In fact, pornography presents the most negative outdated versions of who men are to the rest of the world. If we change our basic views of what sex is, then we will contribute to a better world, a new world.

*Dr. S. Hite, visiting professor of gender and culture at Nihon University in Japan, has lectured at universities around the world including the Sorbonne, Harvard, Columbia, Cambridge, Oxford and the London School of Economics. Dr. Hite is the author of 12 books, including the groundbreaking, *The Hite Report: A Nationwide Study of Female Sexuality*, which has sold more than 48 million copies, and *The Hite Reader* (Seven Stories Press, 2006).*

North Korean Musical Pushes Boundaries

Yodok Stories
DIRECTED BY ANDRZEJ FIDYK
2008

Concentration camps, totalitarian communist rule, forced child labor in the coal mines... So many aspects of the deplorable living conditions in North Korea resonate as an anachronism, a kaleidoscope of bad memories from the past century. To make a musical out of all this seems shamelessly in tune with today's instant commodification of humanitarian crises, but in *Yodok Stories*, a must-see documentary that debuted at this year's Tribeca Film Festival, it proves an apt means to an end. The project of esteemed Polish documentarian Andrzej Fidyk is to put the North Korean crisis on the map by reversing the message channeled through Chairman Kim Jong-il's propaganda machine.

Confronted with a complete lack of record, testimony or access when developing the idea for a film about the camps, Fidyk was inspired by footage of the Mass Games — a stunningly choreographed performance spectacle staged as national celebration — he shot for *The Parade* (1989), so he decided to try to find a North Korean theater director who had defected and would be willing to helm a subversive theatrical counter-production to this extravaganza. Thus started his collaboration with Jung Sun San, an escapee from the notorious camp Yodok, whose experience forms the backbone of *Yodok Story*, the musical, the making of which forms the backbone of this film.

talking to Jung Sun San after he finds out Jung Sun San's family back home has been arrested. The man divulges how the emotionally stunted "Great Leader" was never taught care or concern for anyone else's suffering, a state of arrested development that has translated into the country's deprivation.

North Korea's isolation is not only imposed from within. Its neighbors to the south are either ignorant or skeptical of the plight of North Koreans. (The young cast members of *Yodok Story* look thoroughly bemused when listening to the former inmates' tales of suffering.) Globally, as Fidyk asserts, the only interest in North Korea relates to the nuclear threat posed by Kim Jong-il's regime. That aside, there is little to

Fidyk's film alternates between rehearsal sessions and testimonies by other former prisoners that flesh out the harrowing, invisible reality of camp life. Among the seven stories highlighted is that of a former camp guard, whose jovial interaction with people who used to be at the mercy of his random abuse feels entirely surreal. That aside, there is little to be gained from the liberation of 20 million starving, technologically-backward people. Therefore the South's rhetoric of hoped-for reunification is tinged with hypocrisy, and the North seems destined to remain an eerily latent presence in the "free" part of Korea, like the menacing anonymous text messages Jung Sun San receives.



What binds these exiles together are the absurd reasons for their imprisonment — as arbitrary as dropping a paper with a picture of Kim Jong-il on the ground — and the relatives they had to leave behind without any prospect of reunion. The state dictate of “guilt by association” leads a former bodyguard of Kim Jong-il to stop talking to Jung Sun San after he finds out Jung Sun San’s family back home has been arrested. The man divulges how the emotionally stunted “Great Leader” was never taught care or concern for anyone else’s suffering, a state of arrested development that has translated into the country’s deprivation.

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on his cell phone.

June Sun San takes the camp survivors into the demilitarized zone between the two countries to observe the other side from within walking distance, where he advertises his show to the North Koreans by packing postcards into balloons and surreptitiously setting them adrift on a favorable wind from the graveyard that is the closest point to the North. Closing credits tell us that *Yodok Story* became one of the most successful productions ever staged in South Korea. Until it hits Broadway, this concise, sobering film is the sole international exposure of the boldness of its agenda.

-KENNETH CRAVEN

The second Annual New York Loves Mountains Festival May 29-31 will expose the dangers of upstate natural gas drilling and how our electricity comes at the price of mountain-top removal coal mining in Appalachia. *The Indypendent's* Katrin Redfern talks to playwright Sarah Moon and environmental writer Jeff Biggers explains why you should care.

WBAI Radio Battle

Continued from page 7

ment training for staff, the strain of repeated fund drives, the proliferation of premiums offered by programmers and the failure of many programmers to register their premiums in a timely manner. These problems were compounded when the station started running out of money to pay its vendors.

Williams, who had a 20-year career in corporate finance with the Xerox and Applied Materials corporations, said she plans to serve as WBAI's general manager for the next two years. She will

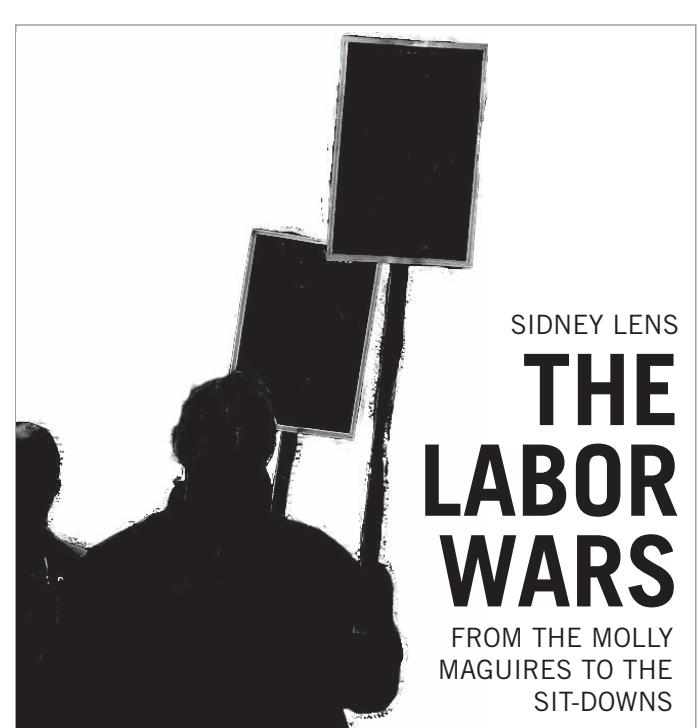
for three to six months. She said she will look for a business savvy replacement who "is in tune with the [Pacific] mission."

bers met May 12 to plan a multi-pronged campaign that could include lawsuits, protests and civil disobedience to reinstate White and Riddle. They are also preparing for LSB elections that will take place at the end of the summer and initiating a petition campaign to recall four members of the LSB including Birden, Ross, LSB Chair Mitchel Cohen and multi-millionaire direct mail marketer Steve Brown, who bankrolled much of the station critics' last campaign.

Meanwhile, Lavarn Williams is ready to charge ahead.

"WBAI is in the middle of the radio dial in the media capitol of the world. There's no way this should be a mediocre station," she said.

Find WBAI online at wbai.org.



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